

Among this week's contributors

BRIAN ALOISS's novels include *A Rude Awakening*, 1978.

SYDNEY ANOLO is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University College of Swansea.

JULIAN BALNICK is a lecturer in the Study of Religions at King's College, London.

CAROLINE BINGHAM is the author of *Land of the Scots: A Short History*, 1983.

CARMEN BLACKER's *The Catapa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* was published in 1975.

GRAHAM BRAOSHAU is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of St Andrews.

KEITH BRANIGAN's books include *The Atlas of Archaeology*, 1982.

AUREY BURL is currently writing a book about Sinn Féin.

JULIET CLUTTON-BROCK is the author of *Domesticated Animals from Early Times*, 1981.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM is the editor of *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 1980.

P. G. DORRELL is a lecturer in Archaeological Photography at the Institute of Archaeology, London.

J. R. DURANT is Staff Tutor in Biology in the Department for External Studies, University of Oxford.

DALE F. EICKELMAN's most recent book is *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, 1981.

ROBERT FOX is a BBC journalist who has worked extensively in Italy.

J. N. GRAY is a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. His book *Mill on Liberty* was published earlier this year.

JANE GRAYSON's *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose* was published in 1977.

PHYLIS GROSSKURTH is the author of *Harelock Ellis: A Biography*, 1980.

MARTIN HARRISON is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Newcastle.

MARGARET HIGONNET teaches Comparative Literature at the University of Connecticut.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS is Washington Correspondent for the *Nation*.

GEORGE HOLMES's most recent books include *The Good Parliament*, 1975, and *Danic*, 1980.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF is the author of *A Just Measure of Pain: Penitentiaries in the Industrial Revolution in England, 1750-1850*.

JOSEPH LEE's *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918* was published in 1973.

PETER LOIZOS is the author of *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, 1981.

COLIN LUCAS's *The Structure of the Terror* was published in 1973.

CAROLINE MOOREHEAD's *Fortune's Histories: Kidnapping in the World Today* was published in 1980.

RICHARD MURPHY received the American Irish Foundation's Literary Award of \$10,000 for 1983.

VENETIA NEWALL is a Research Fellow in Folklore at University College London.

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS's *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* was published last year.

ALEC NOVE's books include *Stalinism and After*, 1975, and *Political Economy and Soviet Socialism*, 1979.

GEORFFREY PARKER's most recent book is *Europe in Crisis 1598-1648*, 1979.

MARTIN RICHARDS is the co-author of *Parent-Baby Attachment in Premature Infants* which will appear later this year.

MARK RIOLEY's first book, *The Explanation of Organic Diversity*, will be published soon.

DAVID ROBINSON is film critic of *The Times*.

F. M. L. THOMPSON is the editor of *The Rise of Snobbery*, 1982.

BYRD TONKIN is a lecturer in English at the City University.

BRIAN VICKERS is Professor of English and Renaissance Literature at the ETH, Zürich.

DAVID WILSON is a lecturer in Social Anthropology at the Queen's University of Belfast.

MICHAEL WOOD's *America in the Movies: or, "Santa Maria, I have Shipped My Mind"* was published in 1975.

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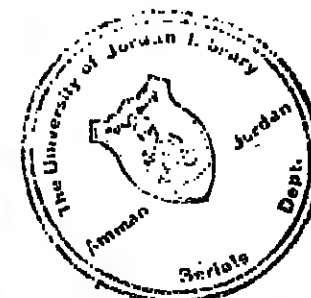
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The Pound/Ford letters

D. J. Enright on Coetzee's 'Michael K'



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CLANCHY, M. T.	<i>England and its Rulers 1066-1272: Foreign Lordship and National Identity</i> [W. L. Warren]
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Among this week's contributors	

LANGUAGE

Writing and its spokesman

A. C. Danto

JACQUES DERRIDA

Margins of Philosophy
Translated by Alan Bass
330pp. Brighton: Harvester Press. £25.
0 7108 0454 7

Jacques Derrida has been embraced with a dazzled admiration by our humanistic literati, but by the Anglo-American philosopher he is viewed with a curiosity at best tepid, across a chilly, suspicious distance. Given the values of the profession, this *folded* is easily understood: Derrida's prose communicates an instant conviction of some, perhaps absolute frivolity; he is conceded even by his enthusiasts to be a critic rather than a philosopher; and his enterprise is widely if vaguely identified as the deconstruction of philosophy, something we sorely need import if it means what it is thought to mean, since the history of analytical philosophy, from the Pragmatists through Wittgenstein and the Postivists to Richard Rorty, is a chronicle of self-administered autopsies.

But beyond this, the alarming component of the literary Derridians does not encourage closer acquaintance, for these appear less to be pursuing an intellectual programme than displaying the grave symptoms of having swallowed a phantasm: uttering glibly obscure, preferring puns to arguments, insinuating phallic motivations with broad Freudian winks, wallowing in impossible etymologies as a form of wit, and foregoing the sweet charities of English for what look like transcriptions of primary processes—as though writing were a form of learned graffiti, a way of ruining paper. Acceptance seems to consist in imitation, as though style and substance were one. Philosophy may indeed be doing, but at least is a death with dignity.

Now it is not, I think, difficult to explain both the impact and its form. In the middle and late 1960s, literary study was under double attack. From the one flank it was put down as much the intellectual inferior of the two cultures, from the other it was branded, as irrelevant. Three amazing books by Derrida appeared in 1967: *La Voix et le phénomène*, *L'écriture et la différence*, and, of particular moment, *De la grammatologie*. Any such explosion of brilliant writing would

confer an instant fame, but the common theme promised a double salvation to the embattled disciplines. Writing as such—*écriture*—which after all is the special province of the literary, was proclaimed the defining human endeavour, almost as though man were an inscribed being whose true identity had been concealed from him, since writing itself has been the historical victim of a vast conspiracy of repression, otherwise known as the history of philosophy. From Plato to Heidegger, philosophy has been a mosque of ideology in political promotion of something Derrida calls *logocentrism*, which flourishes at the expense of writing. He now proposes a new science, grammatology, which is to do for writing what he proposed to do for the Third World. By becoming grammatologists, the literati thus become scientists, and the *rupture* (as they would say) between the two cultures is erased (as they would say). But the newly deputized grammatologists might also place their own liberationist demand on the same front as those other struggles for minority recognition, freeing writing from three millennia of oppression. Giving them political and scientific respectability at once, it would have been remarkable had Derrida not been received as a orophet.

Now little in the advanced formal education of the literary scholar particularly equipped him to follow, let alone criticize, Derrida, who, a *normalien* *parmi normaliens*, is in fact in perfect mastery of the difficult texts he, but not his emulators, takes for granted as he executes his extravagant and allusive improvisations. There was nothing to do but take over the monism, with I should suppose disastrous consequences for the curriculum, since students have less resistance than their teachers, who have only a set of postures to transmit. Meanwhile, in the rush to enlist in the army of deconstruction, it was perhaps overlooked that Derrida had so widened the notion of writing that literature as such, unless proportionately widened, is a very small part of it; that grammatology, to the degree that it exists as a science, must include physics (if the universe can be regarded as a kind of writing—a "message" written in a cosmic code)—as Heidegger maintains; and that speech, in whose cause writing is said to have been disenfranchised, must

under the generalization, itself be a term of writing, as Derrida concedes. But if "Oral language already belongs to this language," as he says in *Grammatology*, the distinction he requires in order to get the historical analysis he requires, is deconstructed from within, and it is no longer clear to what degree it can be accepted. Derrida's texts leave the enterprise of literary study precisely where it was at the moment of salvation. Bitter disillusion! Of course the division between the two cultures has disintegrated since and through Kuhn, and the cry for relevance has gone the way of a political fad.

In view of this unifying narrative, it may be wondered whether there is any reason for analytical philosophy, whose self-confidence is currently not high, to overcome a natural distaste and look more deeply into this singular writer. The answer, I think, is not even a very highly qualified yes, and there is perhaps no better place to begin than with *Margins of Philosophy*, which belongs to Derrida's middle period, as one of again three works to have appeared all in the same year, 1972. It assembles pieces which mainly appeared elsewhere, and indeed seven of its eleven writings have already been translated by other hands into such English as Derrida is capable of. Why the publishers did not gather these rather than commission an altogether new translation of all of them by Alan Bass, is perhaps not a significant mystery. The density of Derridian inscription in any case raises such problems for translation, with its eccentric terminology, its oblique and ever-determined references, its inscriptive punning across various languages, and the staggering vastness of its erudite apparatus, that we must be grateful for these who find fulfillment in this labour, and I simply want to praise Dr Bass for having made this book as accessible as he has. It is in my view Derrida's best writing, and certainly his most philosophical, so if philosophers find it unrewarding, they are little likely to derive much profit from the wider corpus unless, as specialists, they should be driven to come to terms with what he says of one or another historical figure: Plato, or Rousseau, or Condillac, or whoever.

I would not begin at the beginning, with the typographically bizarre and self-indulgent "Tyman", which offers itself, through a strained analogy with the eardrum, as a prefatory vestibule,

and which anticipates the increasing idiosyncrasy of Derrida's later style. Nor even with the first essay, "Différance", where a willed mis-inscription of an "a" for an "e" directs us to perhaps the most original piece of philosophizing Derrida has produced to date, namely a kind of ontological discussion of what it is to be an *inscripational* being, "différance" (with an "a") being a gerund designating a process of differing and deferring, and best understood on the model of *naïvisme* in Spinoza's powerful concept of *natura naturans*. An unceasing alternative would be "language", if we understand language as Saussure did, as a system of differences: the difference is the dynamism of making things differences. Rather, I would begin with the last essay, "Signature Event Context", where the analyst will find himself on surprisingly familiar ground, as it deals with the still mooted theories of J. L. Austin.

Austin's generative thought was that language, traditionally treated as descriptive, and hence largely as representation by philosophers obsessed with bringing sentences (or thoughts) into correspondence with facts, is also, and perhaps dominantly, a performative instrument and the vehicle of a kind of action. Waving the banner of what Austin termed "The Descriptive Fallacy", philosophers of ordinary language set about trying to demonstrate that a great many, perhaps all philosophical problems, were due to the mistake of looking for the designation of certain crucial terms rather than to their use in acts of speech. Combatting what Derrida would call a "logocentric prejudice", they were grammatologists even in *leire*. So Austin is lauded here for "having explicated the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept". Nevertheless, the concept exploded in required in order to detonate the charge, and so, Derrida argues, performativity is finally dependent on descriptivity. Consider the familiar example: when someone says "I promise" he is not describing but doing something, promising *constituting* in saying "I promise". But I have just in effect said "I promise" without making any promise at all, simply showing how that instrument of language it is done, but thinking primarily of stage-actors, dismisses them as parasitic in order to get on with his analysis. But Derrida

insists that if saying something is what an action consists in, well, there must be a rule under which saying is transformed into doing; and the rule must *cite* the expression. Rather than citation being dependent on performance, the dependency is the other way round: ne citations, ne performances.

Now this is very intelligent criticism, and an elegant example of a deconstruction, understood as a demonstration that a thesis actually requires as one of its conditions the very thing it means to reject. So it goes considerably deeper than the characteristic analytical effort to find counter-examples, since it treats the thesis in terms of some total system, and illuminates its presuppositions. The question is not whether there are speech acts, though it would not be Derrida if he did not, implicitly, pretend that there might be none, but that "these effects do not exclude what is generally opposed to them term by term, but on the contrary presuppose it as the general space of their possibility".

The kind of difficulty he finds in Austin parallels the difficulty he finds in Lévi-Strauss— "Whether he wants to or not—and this does not depend on a decision on his part—the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he denounces them." It is paralleled by whatever critique he offers of whatever thinker: to use a guarded analogy with psychoanalysis, it is like the Oedipus complex, which may be the invariant basis of each neurosis, but since its disguises are infinite and fantastic, each patient must be treated differently. "We can produce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest." Derrida wrote in *Writing and Difference*, where he added "The step outside philosophy is much more difficult to conceive than is generally imagined by those who think they made it long ago with cavalier ease."

Margins of Philosophy is a series of applications of this thought differing only in the degree of ingenuity required to expose the knot of paradox which holds the threads of the various texts together. There is a brilliant criticism, for example, of the linguist Émile Benveniste, who had sought,

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like so many of his counterparts in linguistic philosophy *chez nous*, to show that the concept of being is but a grammatical artefact taken for a metaphysical category. Derrida shows that Benveniste takes for granted what he seeks to explain away. Philosophy always reappropriates for itself the discourse that delimits it. If correct, the programme of seeking to dissolve philosophical language by returning it to the homely contexts of ordinary usage needs philosophical language in order to achieve the dissolution: so nothing is dissolved. If Derrida's position then deconstructs itself, well, this was to have been expected if it was a philosophical position after all: all critiques of philosophy consist of philosophy discovering its own limits from within. So the margins of the subject are, as it were, the heart of the subject. Or philosophy is all margin.

Since from this charmed and vicious circle there is no escape, not to linguistics, lexicography, psychology, anthropology, or logic, the question is to do. "The passage beyond philosophy", Derrida once wrote, "does not consist in turning the page of philosophy (which usually amounts to philosophizing bodily) but continuing to read philosophers in a certain way." Since virtually everything Derrida has done consists in reading philosophers, himself on occasion included, "in a certain way", it is easy to see how he might be perceived finally as a kind of critic rather than a philosopher—until we appreciate that reading "in a certain way" has as much claim to be philosophy as "analysing in a certain way" has. We get a due to his positive programme, such as it is, in the remarkable paper, "Quel Qu'elle: Valéry's Sources", which begins archly by taking as canonical a testimonial to Perrier water Valéry happened to write, but proceeds, by allowing

"source" to resonate against "origin", to turn itself into a discourse on the ego as something logically outside the experiences said to depend upon it, *en passant* laying down the imperatives of Derrida's own programme. A task is then prescribed: to study the philosophical text in its formal structure, in its rhetorical organization, in the specificity and diversity of its textual types, in its models of exposition and production beyond what were previously called genres—and also in the space of its *miex en scène*, in a syntax which would be not only the articulations of its significations, its reference to Being and to truth, but also to the handling of its proceedings and of everything invested in them. In a word, the task is to consider philosophy also as "a particular literary genre".

To be treated as literature may seem a radical demotion to philosophers who thought the point of philosophy was to find truth. When we consider the Bible as literature, there is an implication that there remain good reasons for reading it even after we have stopped seeing it as the vessel of saving truths. But why read philosophers that way, whose texts can hold little interest once the claims have been deconstructed out?

But there are deeper and, I think, more structural reasons why analytical philosophers might find it difficult to follow Derrida in this literary adventure. It is not merely that he draws consistently upon a tradition which, if we are not Continental, we can only know about but not live within, but rather that nothing analytical philosophy has dealt with particularly helps with the concept of texts he has made so prominent. Frege is often credited by taking as canonical a testimonial to Perrier water Valéry happened to write, but proceeds, by allowing

of philosophical examination. The controversies within analytical philosophy are defined in terms of how the sentence is to be treated, as something the meaning of which is a function of its constituent parts or instead as something the meaning of which is its use. Such larger units as philosophers have dealt with have been, on the one hand, arguments and formal systems and, on the other, language games (including conversations) and forms of life. But texts are held together by forces not obviously reducible to logical connections or rules of usage, and possibly, if analysis is restricted to the latter sorts of language, not for analysis at all but interpretation. Interpretation, however, is not something I think is very well understood, not even by those who advocate it as something beyond the reach of analysis. Hermeneutics has so far been more a slogan than an alternative.

Derrida's own interpretations are more often stunning than convincing, and if one keeps one's critical antennae from being bruised by the fireworks, they are often badly flawed. None is more so than the acclaimed "White Mythology", perhaps the centrepiece of this collection. A rumination on metaphor and philosophy, it slides treacherously from a metaphorical characterization of philosophy to a characterization of philosophy as metaphorical. It contends fallaciously that a non-metaphorical analysis of metaphor is logically excluded by the fact that metaphor itself is a metaphor. And it culminates in a "brilliant" reading of Descartes's *Meditations* which might be expected from an imaginative undergraduate, seizing on "the natural light" as a metaphor when it just might not be one. Even so, the emphasis upon philosophical texts as the least unit of philosophical discourse strikes me as a profound and perhaps a liberating contribution. It might give us



"Portrait of the Artist's Mother" (1924), by Aleksandr Rodchenko, reproduced from Grigory Shindakov's *Pioneers of Soviet Photography* (253pp, Thames and Hudson, £20.00, 0 500 54995 0).

a deeper insight than "the arguments of the philosophers" can do, not only into philosophical thought but into thought as such, in case, for example, the more accessible computational models prove fatally unsuitable. Unfortunately, we know very little of the logic of texts, and those who might help us, the literati, have, one hopes momentarily, gone mad on

The thing itself

D. J. Enright

J. M. COETZEE
Life & Times of Michael K
250pp, Secker and Warburg, £7.95.
0 436 10297 8

Michael K is born with a harelip, which though it prevents the baby from sucking will bring luck to the household. Or so the midwife says. The household consists only of K and his mother, and small luck does it bring them. If you are called K, you will need a lot of luck.

It doesn't do, he is done to. Leaving a special school for the afflicted, he works for the Parks and Gardens division of the City of Cape Town, sport from a brief stint as night attendant in a public lavatory which ends when he is beaten up and robbed. Although falling at some length to labour camp, he sets off with his ailing mother, pushing her in a hand-cart, for the farm in the middle of the Great Karoo where she was born. She dies on the way.

Thereafter various unpleasant things are done to K, while K does little but suffer patiently until he can escape to the next thing to be done to him. K is nowhere said to be black: the author, I take it, would find such specificity limiting. He finds himself in a "detention camp" providing cheap labour for farmers and the railways, then makes his way to the abandoned farm, builds a cave, eats beetles, mushrooms and roots, and starts to grow pumpkins. "A man must live so that he leaves no trace of his living." Except in the form of pumpkins, and even that is dangerous, it draws attention to you.

There is a war in progress, and K is caught by soldiers who suppose him to

be running a staging post for guerrillas. "So tell us about your friends," the soldier said. K shook his head. He was hit a terrific blow in the pit of the stomach and fainted. K has no friends, and doesn't respond to friendly gestures, not even those made by the well-intentioned but excitable medical officer at the "rehabilitation centre" where, though he is only thirty-two, they take him for a little old man. He looks "like someone out of Dachau", but steadfastly refuses to eat the camp food or to explain himself, except in such gnomic utterances as "I am not in the war" and "We are all the children of the earth".

Years may have been less than wholly correct in declaring that passive suffering was not a theme for poetry, but it is probably not a sufficient theme for a novel. Kafka's K-characters, if not exactly masters of their fate, are comparatively brisk, alert and active. But "I have never seen anyone as asleep as you", a fellow inmate at the labour camp tells this K. "Sometimes" we hear "he would emerge into wakefulness unsure whether he had slept a day or a week or a month." (Not surprising, then, if the reader should nod off.) The medical officer, for whom he becomes a precious obsession, sees him as "a hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life", as "one of those toys made of sticks held together with rubber bands", as "a stick insect that has landed. God knows how, in the middle of a great wide flat bare concrete plain". Towards the close K surmises that the truth about himself is that he is a gardener—though "more like an earthworm. Which is also a kind of gardener. Or a mole, also a gardener, that does not tell stories because it lives in silence."

The one sexual incident in the novel struck me as, scarcely credible—

hitherto as sexual as a toy made of sticks and rubber bands. K is too passive even for the role of passive partner—and utterly gratuitous. Yet the author always means—and I could only put it down to pious memories of the rather more robust rollings on the floor of K and the barmaid Frieda in *The Castle*. Or to the lack of anything else to be done to K. Or conceivably, since he seems to fall asleep during the happening, to his innocent incuriosity.

One is tempted to propose that we identify allegory by its combination of thinness of material (action-packed novels are rarely allegorical) with indeterminacy of time, place and circumstance. A skilled writer will thicken the mixture in one way or another, contriving universality without totally forfeiting reality. Coetzee himself did this with considerable tact in his last novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

We are repelled by any sort of

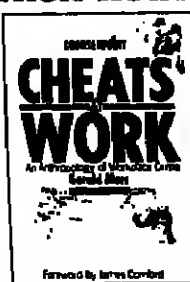
writing that, in K's phrase, "has a palpable design upon us". With *Life & Times of Michael K* we are conscious of a palpable design, while the nature of the design remains impalpable: as it were, a symbol without a referent, a fable without a moral. Yet if we show good-will—as we ought, for we do not sense dishonesty or pretentiousness here—perhaps a moral does emerge. "The thing itself", "unaccommodated man", rolled round in earth's diurnal course—this reviewer should be teaching literature too—K has passed through the guts of the State without being digested. Neither cruelty nor kindness has tamed him. In the final pages, in an outburst of unusually sustained cogitation, he muses:

There is nothing to be ashamed of in being simple. They were locking up simpletons before they looked up anyone else. Now they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and people with little heads... camps for street girls, camps for people who can't add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night. Perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all the camps at the same time. Perhaps that is enough of an achievement, for the time being. How many people are there who are neither locked up nor standing guard at the gate? I have escaped the camps; perhaps, if I lie low, I will escape the charity too.

True, he is free. Free for what? Unlike most of Kafka's heroes, he has survived, but less as thinking reed than as an unthinking stone, a barely living creature whom no one, apart from an allegorizing medical officer, takes seriously, whom no one takes seriously enough to kill. So the world is only safe for a rare species of simpleton?

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The Hedonists Rehearse the Uprising

In two hours it will be Fasching and our watches will tell us we are having a good time. Miskery, say those returning from this temple where the scanner reads the lamp, is as palpable as sunshine.

The countryman of God are setting out the sails, the oars, the sandwatches, or to turn, who like to place their bets both ways, the stomach pumps.

Slaves to duty, as much as fifty as fifteen, the hedonists are still in service last Saturday night and holidays be their accusers. But what of work, a drug beyond addition? I continue to compose because it fatigues me less than resting. Who could face meeting such a God in abstract dark?

Grave lies of souls are pressing to the waterline, the boys like Botticelli angels in the tinted air, the girls immaculate in white. How art nouveau the very leaves of longitudes, and leaves of golden forests, and leaves of green forests, and leaves of blue forests, and leaves of red forests, and leaves of purple forests, and leaves of black forests, and leaves of white forests, and leaves of grey forests, and leaves of brown forests, and leaves of pink forests, and leaves of orange forests, and leaves of yellow forests, and leaves of green forests, and leaves of blue forests, and leaves of red forests, and leaves of purple forests, and leaves of black forests, and leaves of white forests, and leaves of grey forests, and leaves of brown forests, and leaves of pink forests, and leaves of orange forests, and leaves of yellow forests, and leaves of green forests, and leaves of blue forests, and leaves of red forests, and leaves of purple forests, and leaves of black forests, and leaves of white forests, and leaves of grey forests, and leaves of brown forests, and leaves of pink forests, and leaves of orange forests, 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commentary

Unfair to middling

Peter Kemp

MICHAEL FRAYN
Towards the End of the Morning
JEAN RHYS
After Leaving Mr MacKenzie
Radio 4

As its title indicates, Michael Frayn's *Towards the End of the Morning* looks at early middle age. Revolving round newspaper offices and television studios, it also surveys media middlemen. And with sprightly acceptance, it shows the middling achievements of youthful ambitions in fact themselves having to settle for. In Frayn's novel, marriages aren't quite what partners hoped they'd be; lovers are half-resignedly aware of each other's drawbacks; jobs and houses fall emphatically short of expectations. The book ends with a brash whiz-kid publicly repeating the word "sure", but, privately, most of its characters are extremely unsure. Getting on chronologically, though not professionally, they heap up routine to shut out intimations of mortality. The messy minutiae of preparing a newspaper for the presses, a television programme for the cameras, are, in this novel, both gaudy with sardonic gusto and respected as a means of fending off queasy thoughts of ageing and death.

Never really catching the book's wavelenght, Geoffrey M. Matthews's adaptation presented the piece as not much more than a strident satire on the media. Turned into a radio play, the work became at once blurred and louder. None of the wry melancholy — "He had been young all his life, and now suddenly youth seemed to be leaving out of him" — was picked up. Instead, an expert, as from Martin Jarvis, all naive uncertainty as a Fleet Street man with an eye on television celebrity, to Penella Fielding, in fine

smoky vocal fettle as a fading *femme fatale* — had to make do with a script not far above the level of that for some situation comedy. Frayn's weakness for dialogue over-dependent on catch-phrases was gratefully amplified into farce. His novel's strengths were feebly represented: none of its pervading sense of the bleakness behind the busy-ness, none of its wistful, down-to-earth recognition of the way time can clip hopes.

Far more successful was David Marshall's version of *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie* — a book which, far from taking a resignedly cheery attitude towards life's limitations, presents a lyrically *risqué* account of someone who can't do this. Highly visual and featuring a heroine who is hypersensitive to the ways people look at her, the novel hardly seems promising material for a radio play. Yet, in the event, the adaptation was compelling — largely due to a performance of virtuoso delicacy from Dorothy Tutin, surrounded by a number of perceptive, well-portrayed smaller roles.

As with all Jean Rhys's fiction, *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie* operates through opposites. Julia, the protagonist, looks gaudy but is forlorn. Fecklessly bohemian, she flutters feebly round tough, prudent bourgeois males. Penniless and vaguely disreputable, she vainly solicits help from the moneyed and the conventional. The narrative charts her wandering, tremulous attempts to achieve stability. Leaving MacKenzie, the man who's kept her, and Paris, the city where she's lived, she trails — half-hopefully, half-disconsolately — back to London and her family. Finding no support here, she strays wanly, as the story ends, back to her Parisian haunts and parasitic ways.

All of this was brought quiveringly to life by Dorothy Tutin. Skillfully and sympathetically, she caught all the nervy shifts of Julia's character. Wheelings switched into wheelings —

away as self-respect briefly and pathetically flared. The voice hardened with temporary, febrile bravado, then slackened into a slight slur as Pernod or self-pity thickened it. Particularly effective were the scenes where Julia, hoping to establish some warmer rapport, is doled out cold comfort by her sister, Norah. Being snubbed when vulnerable, repelled by the repellently respectable, is an especial dread in Rhys's books. And here, as Julia was rebuffed by the off-handed callousness of Norah — played with flinty briskness by Isabel Dean — there was a powerful and painful sense of emotional bruising. Adeptly capturing the nature of the Rhys heroine — part touching and part clinging — the play also gave a vivid impression of the terrain round which she roams. Careful sound-effects and adroitly used music atmospherically evoked a characteristic Jean Rhys world of sad cafés, lonely streets, the boxy bedrooms and thinly-carpeted corridors of cheap hotels.

Following the lead

Ronald Hayman

DAVID MAMET
Glengarry Glen Ross
Cottesloe Theatre

As a virtuoso of theatrical invective, David Mamet surpasses even Edward Albee, who conceded that Mamet had a fine ear, but complained that there was no sign of a fine mind. Ostensibly rallying to Mamet's defence, Ruby Cohn has declared that a fine mind is what he has, a mind so fine (as Eliot said of Henry James's) that no idea can violate it. Wary of American reactions to his work, Mamet has given his new play to the National Theatre, where he has collaborated on sandpapering the dialogue with the director Bill Bryden and seven of the actors who regularly work with Bryden. The excellent play which results disapproves both American charges.

The characters have no time for ideas which can't be measured in dollars, but the action has enormous resonance. Cleverly and disturbingly, Mamet plays with the idea that the difference between robbery and Chicago salesmanship is only a difference of degree. These hard-



"Still Life with Jugs and Fruit", c.1938, a painting (from the collection of the Queen Mother) in the Mother Smith exhibition reviewed on the preceding page.

boiled real-estate salesmen have no moral scruples; and what they are selling has no value — tracts of undeveloped land which cannot be developed. The only commodity that has value — for them — is the "lead", the contact with the potential buyer. Some leads are valuable, the value of the lead depending on the wealth and gullibility of the client.

In distilling an oppressive theatrical poetry out of the transactions between deceiver and dupe, the play has affinities with *The Alchemist*, but an essential difference is that Mamet's men are not delinquent mavericks but programmed parts of a system in which the incentives are commission and such bonuses as a free Cadillac, while the deterrent is dismissal. Nor is there any indication of a superior moral force: the representatives of authority are unscrupulous and corruptible — a bullying cop and a sly office manager.

The nexus between robbery and salesmanship was one of the themes in Mamet's 1977 play *American Buffalo*, which was seen at the Cottesloe the following year in Bill Bryden's production, and which prefigures *Glengarry Glen Ross* in making much of the plot revolve around changes in plan in a carefully organized crime. It is conducive to the development of the central idea that plotting bulks large in

the plot, but the play, unlike the crime, is plotted well.

It looks at first as though the play will take the form of a series of set duologues. The set for the first act is a Chinese restaurant with three tables in it, and the duologue at the first table is a good deal longer than it needs to be, though it has some very funny moments, which are fully exploited by Derek Network as Shelly, an aging salesman, and Karl Johnson as the office manager, who dishes out the leads.

The second act is set in the office after the break-in, with boards covering the smashed windows and papers littering the floor. The telephones have been stolen; a locker cop is beckoning the salesmen one by one into another room for an interrogation which is unpleasant, anything but polite. Entertainingly and accurately, Mamet explores the behaviour of these men in a world which threatens their ability to earn a livelihood. One of the most revealing sequences occurs when Shelly impersonates a rich and satisfied client in order to help Richard, the youngest salesman (Jack Shepherd), to hoodwink the unsuspecting client he has been chatting up in the restaurant. Torn between greed for profit and sheepish devotion to the manny who says he must cancel the deal, the man indignantly played by Tony Hayman does not even seem to notice the broken window or the papers on the floor.

Mamet and the actors excel at exposing the stubborn desperation and the wild resourcefulness of salesmen who will stop at nothing to establish their position on the "block", the graph which plots their progress in competition with each other. Jack Shepherd and Derek Network's best performance is in the performance of Richard and Shelly improvising, and Richard afterwards puts on a different kind of performance to display friendship to his client, exploding into a fit of abuse when the office manager contradicts one of the lies he has told.

Bill Bryden has never got better results from his method of working repeatedly with the same actors. In a repertoire "company" in which the characters are played by the same actors, the exaggerated emotional pauses, the exaggerated expletives, could not have been played so well if each actor had not been familiar with the tricks and timing of his partner. The office scene Bryden uses spaces (lack of space) extremely well, while the actors can tellingly simulate the tensions of working competitively in a team. At the same time they manage to give convincingly American performances, which is less a matter of accent than of rhythm — delivery by modulation. They are helped by precision and incisiveness of Mamet's writing, but in this grilling play even the more tactful characters live on the verge of hysteria, impassioned outbursts never uncontrolled.

A copy of a confidential document has arrived on my desk which, were its authenticity not confirmed by a report in the *Bookeller*, I would have dismissed as a malevolent forgery calculated to place the Publishers' Association in ill repute. It is a copy of a bid by the Publishers' Association to extract £1 million from the Arts Council Literature Department.

The paper argues that over the past five years "the condition of Literature has become increasingly disturbing", and that not only fiction and poetry, but also history and biography are "endangered species". Many works of literary merit are failing to find publishers, or are being published at prices which put them out of the reach of the general public. The paper does not suggest that publishers might have anything to do with this state of affairs. On the contrary, the traditional view that publishers should subsidize their more literary titles out of the revenue from their bestsellers (in fact, cover their failures with their successes) is dismissed as "unrealistic".

Publishers have no obligation to subsidize literature — or to put it more bluntly, publishers must not make losses on books and therefore will not publish titles they think will be uneconomical. On the other hand, the Arts Council does have such an obligation, although as we all know, "Literature" as at present poorly subsidised by the Arts Council. A scheme does exist by which publishers can apply for subsidies on individual titles, but the paper argues that it is "unjustified" for the Arts Council to have to decide which titles merit subsidy, and "the process of selection is slow and often apparently arbitrary".

Accordingly, the Publishers' Association proposes to take the whole business out of the Arts Council's hands, and set up a Literary Investment Trust. This will be a non-profit-making body, funded by the Arts Council but also capable of raising money from other quarters. Beneath a panel of Publishers' Association trustees will be an editorial board, including authors, literary critics, academics and persons having experience but not active present interests in publishing.

The Trust will decide which works should be subsidized, but the books will still be published by individual commercial publishers. The direct costs of publication will be met by the Trust, plus a service charge to cover the publisher's overheads. If the book moves into profit, there is provision for this to be shared between the Trust and the publisher, the publisher never taking less than 50 per cent. It is anticipated that the Trust would back up to a hundred titles a year, and on an

average grant per title of £2,500, the Publishers' Association is looking for a commitment of £1 million over three years.

It is an ingenious scheme which, if it goes through, as seems likely, would demand a considerable increase in the Arts Council's allocation for literature (this year £875,000) unless other areas are to suffer. The Literature Panel is actively considering the scheme, before a decision this Autumn. But there are objections. The first is that this is only an inflated version of the Arts Council's existing system of subsidizing individual titles, with an added tier of management to make the "unlucky" selections. The current scheme also has a "pay-back" clause, but no publisher is known to have returned any of his grant. The reason for this is not that the Arts Council unerringly selects unprofitable books, but the judicious juggling of overheads ensures that individual titles make a loss. The Trust, if it is to police the scheme properly, will need to employ an army of accountants.

The major objection, however, is that the Literary Investment Trust will absolve the publishing industry of any obligation to publish Literature at all. Profitable books which happen to be of literary merit will appear, of course, but the decision to invest in a writer's talent — which is rarely proved by one book alone — is taken out of the publishers' hands and placed in that of the Trust. (And who will trust the Trust?) Poetry, fiction, biography and history may be endangered species, but would it really help them to preserve a hundred titles in the Literary Investment Trust's wildlife safari park?

Next week, from October 5 to 7, Australia House in the Aldwych plays host to a special book exhibition, mounted by the Australian Book Publishers' Association. It intends to dispel "the myth of a vast cultural backwater populated by Foster-willing jackeroes" by putting on a display of 1,000 titles published in Australia by seventy different Australian publishing houses. The Australians are rightly proud of the fact that 42 per cent of all books in Australia are "homegrown". Among the distinguished Australian publishing houses contributing to this homegrown harvest are Hodder and Stoughton, Allen and Unwin, Heinemann, McGraw-Hill, Macmillan, Methuen, Oxford University Press, Penguin Books, Readers Digest, Doubleday . . .

At the other end of the Strand the Institute of Contemporary Arts is preparing to hold "Art Ink '83", the first ever International fair of

Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

contemporary art publications. Here the orthodox world of publishing art history, museum catalogues and art journals meets the teeming sub-culture of artists' books, where the emphasis is on the art rather than the publishing. Thames and Hudson will be showing some seven different titles, Michael Caine will be showing Apollinaire's *The Bateau-Lavoir*, typography, illustrations and binding by Michael Caine, fifteen copies only.

The fair, from October 28 to 30, is emphatically a public event. There will be seminars on the present and future media of art publishing. Ralph Steadman will be appearing as Leonardo Da Vinci, and sculptor David Mach has been commissioned to produce an artwork out of art books. His last production, the rubber-tyre submarine on the South Bank, suffered an unfortunate fate, but although the ICA occupies the pre-war German embassy, there should be no book-burning this time.

The arrival of John Fuller's *Flying to Nowhere* on the Booker Prize shortlist comes at a key moment for its publisher, the Salamander Press. In January 1981 Tom Fenton published a pamphlet of his younger brother James's poems, *A German Requiem*. It was hand-printed on an old press in Tom Fenton's Edinburgh front room, and sold for £1.30. A *German Requiem* is now a collector's item. But Tom Fenton was not looking for the preciosity of the little poetry press. Two years later there are thirty-eight titles on the Salamander list, there is no more hand printing, and Fenton has bought a computer.

Salamander's principles, however, remain the same: to produce well-designed work at a reasonable price. Fenton's models are the Nonessuch Press, for its design, and the Hogarth Press for the literary quality of its publications. Not surprisingly, poetry has been at the centre of the list. In its first year Salamander also published Craig Raine's *A Free Translation* and Andrew Motion's *Independence*. The success of James Fenton's *The Memory of War* in 1982 made London and New York publishers pay attention. John Fuller's poems *Waiting for the Music* were published by Salamander last year; next week they publish his *Comic Abroad and Sail Away*, poems for children with illustrations by Nicholas Garland, whose *An Indian Journal* is published by Salamander on the same day.

It is impossible not to notice a certain incestuousness about the Salamander circle. John Fuller, a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, was James Fenton's tutor, and he has also taught

Andrew Motion. (Since their Salamander publications Raine has become poetry editor at Faber and Faber, and Motion poetry editor at Chatto and Windus.) Jonathan Keates, whose novel *Allegro Positivo* was published by Salamander yesterday, was also taught by John Fuller, and he knew both Tom and James Fenton at Oxford. Nicholas Garland is an old friend of James Fenton's from the *New Statesman*.

Tom Fenton says he is "not at all worried by the 'clique' theory. How else can you start off a business in your front room without publishing the work of your friends because you think it's good?" He also points out that there is an Edinburgh axis to Oxford's sortilegious sphere. A young student, Stephen Jamieson, whose poems *Black Spiders* were brought out by Salamander last year, has just won a Scottish Arts Council prize. Glasgow writer Alan Spence's short stories, *Is Colours They Are Fine*, published this spring, are selling well, and there are thirteen plays on the list, including John Byrne's *Slab Boys* trilogy.

With biography, travel and even cookery books added to the list, Salamander begins to look like a full-scale publishing house, yet Tom Fenton is only now about to take on his first full-time employee. I asked him if the publicity that a Booker Prize nomination attracts might not overwhelm him. To a certain extent he is protected because Penguin are immediately releasing *Flying to Nowhere* in paperback. His Edinburgh printers can produce a hardback reprint quickly if the orders come in, though at the moment he has no full-time salesmen. He is delighted that both Fuller's novel and James Fenton's forthcoming poems *Children in Exile* should move so quickly into paperback, for the small size of his operation would otherwise hold them back. Tom Fenton hopes that Salamander's success will allow him to take on more staff, so that he can concentrate on working with his authors on the production of well-designed books. It is a simple formula that size somehow threatens.

If you are fond of that particularly English cultural cocktail, wine, cheese and poetry, then October will be a busy month, for Literary Festivala litter the country like fallen leaves. True, the

Bracknell Literature Festival has been postponed until April, following the delay in appointing a successor to Sebastian Barker as poet-in-residence at the South Hill Park Arts Centre, but scarcely a day goes by from October 9 to 20 without a workshop, a children's event, a reading or a celebrity lecture (and sometimes it's the same celebrity).

Cbeletnam, the senior member, has a dense programme that balances Shakespeare, Pevensy, Jane Austen, Wilfred Owen and T.S. Eliot with feminist writing, Rastafarian poetry and Alastair Grey, whose *Unlikely Stories*, Mostly has won this year's Literature Prize. Two events, on October 13 and 14, hold out hopes for a lively exchange of views. On Thursday evening Raymond Williams delivers his lecture "Writing in the Late Twentieth Century", which is followed by a forum (post-mortem?) conducted by Malcolm Bradbury, David Hare and Libby Houston. Raymond Williams may himself reply. On the Friday Malcolm Bradbury delivers his lecture "The Modern American Novel", and is followed by a debate on "The Influence of Marxism on Literature". John Lucas, Colin McCabe and Trevor Griffiths will be refereed by John Spurling. Doubtless this will be well attended by Cheltenham employees of the Government Communications Headquarters.

Trevor Griffiths then travels north to Newcastle (October 21-30) where perhaps he will encounter Melvyn Bragg, fresh from his triumph at the Kent Literature Festival at Folkestone (October 21-23). Bragg is discussing his own novels at Folkestone, and other people's at Newcastle. Andrea Newman talks about her books and television plays at Folkestone, and then meets Deborah Moggach in Newcastle to debate "Totem and Taboo" (her books and television plays).

While Newcastle adopts an orthodox pattern of lectures, discussions and readings, there is an atmosphere of rolled-up sleeves at Folkestone, where the emphasis is on writing workshops. H.R.F. Keating on thrillers, Penelope Lively on short stories, D.M. Thomas on poetry and Zoë Fairbairn on feminist writing. Newcastle, however, has the ultimate closing event, which "aussi includes a glass of vin très ordinaire avec fromages anglais de supermarché". The speaker: Miles Kingston.

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Author, Author

Competition No 142. Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 21. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 142" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Pinter House, 8, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4AB. The solution and results will appear on October 28.

1. At the striking of noon on a certain fifth of March there occurred within a casual radius of Brandon railway station and yet beyond the deepest pools of emptiness between the uttermost stellar systems one of those infinitesimal ripples in the creative silence of the First Cause which always occurs when an exceptional stir of enlightened consciousness agitates any living organism in this astronomical universe.

2. The wind howled dimly round a house standing by itself on the shores of Barking Creek. It was the grey dusk of an early Autumn day. And the occasional harsh cry of a seagull along the distant shore above the wind alone broke the silence of the flat desolate water.

3. Between the months of the

Blackwater and the Colne, on the east coast of Essex, lies an extremely marshy tract veined and fringed in every part with water. It is a waste of a considerable ground contested by sea and land, subject to incessant incursions from the former, but stubbornly maintained by the latter.

Competition No 138. Winner: Alistair Elliot.

Answers:

1. He hath also a drink called cauphie, which is made of a brown berry, and it may be called their clabbing drink between meals, which though it be not very gustful to the palate yet it is very comfortable to the stomach and good for the sight.

2. There came in my time to the College one Nathaniel Comptos, out of Greece. He was the first I ever saw drink coffee; which came not into England till thirty years later.

3. Still, she led the two inquisitive twins away and made them join in the game of hunt-the-zepper, which had been organized by one of her colleagues at the other end of the room.

"Run along now and have your cup of coffee and don't let me see you in the other house."

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapter 14.

Competition No 138. Winner: Alistair Elliot.

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"Run along now and have your cup of coffee and don't let me see you in the other house."

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapter 14.

Among this week's contributors

Geoffrey Berr's most recent book is *Honour among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea*, 1983.

Lucian Bianco's *Origins of the Chinese Revolution 1915-1949* was published in 1972.

J.A. Burrows is the author of *Medieval Writers and their Work*, 1982.

A.C. Danto's most recent book is *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 1981.

Debra Dahn is the author of *Woman and the Party in Revolutionary China*, 1976.

Karen Dawisha is a Rockefeller International Relations Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC.

D.J. Enslin's collection of essays *A World for Senegals* was reviewed recently in the TLS.

Deborah Fox is Professor of English at the University of Toronto.

Michael Holroyd is the author of *Lytton Strachey*, 1971, and *Augustus John*, 1976.

James Joll's books include *Intellectuals in Politics*, 1960, and *Granuel*, 1977.

Ian Kershaw's *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich*, 1933-1945, was published this year.

William Lamont's books include *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, 1979.

Zachary Leader is the author of *Reading Blake's Songs*, 1981.

P.S. Lewis is the author of *Later Medieval France: The Poity*, 1968.

Roger Lomax's novels include *Their Pleasing Sport*, 1975, and *The Babe in the Wood*, 1976.

Michael Mason is a lecturer in English at University College London.

William Mostyn-Owen is a Director of the Old Master Department at Christie's.

Peter Porter's *Collected Poems* were published earlier this year.

Nicholas Rankin's stage adaptation of stories by J.L. Borges, *Arrest* was performed in 1980.

Sir James Richards's *The National Trust Book of English Architecture* was published in 1981.

Geoffrey Sampson's most recent books are *Liberty and Language*, 1979 and *Schools of Linguistics*, 1980.

R.S. Short is Senior Lecturer in the School of Modern Languages and European History at the University of East Anglia.

P.H. Sutcliffe is the author of *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History*, 1976.

W.L. Warren's *Henry II* was published in 1973.

John White is a Senior Lecturer in American History at the University of Hull.

William S. McFeely is the author of *Grant: A Biography*, 1975.

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to the editor

Henry Stubbe

Sir, - My attention has been drawn to a review by Blair Worden of J. R. Jacob's *Henry Stubbe, Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment* which appeared in your issue of August 5. I hope it is not too late to offer a comment on it.

Dr Worden is dismissive of a book which I found a fascinating piece of scholarly detective work. I thought that Jacob successfully destroyed the traditional view that Stubbe was a time-serving turncoat, and gave a plausible explanation for his otherwise apparently motiveless attacks on the Royal Society. I am not expert enough to be able to test all Jacob's ingenious hypotheses, but his case that Stubbe was a man of principle playing some sort of intellectual double game after 1660 seemed to me to make sense. Stubbe's brusque dismissal of "a thesis which has no evidence to support it" is quite unjust to the vast amount of scholarly labour which had gone into Jacob's book. Jacob shows Stubbe as a popularizer of Hobbes in Oxford in the 1650s, as one of the earliest revisionist Harringtonians, a consistent advocate of toleration for all Protestants, a consistent critic of the "Latitudinarians", and he confirms Austin Woolrych's recent estimate of the significance of Stubbe's contribution to political thinking in 1659-60. Jacob elucidates Stubbe's part in the controversies surrounding the "Stroker", Valentine Greatrakes, and shows him carrying radical politics to "the common sort", tapers, hostlers and "apron-men" in the south-west in the 1670s. He also reveals a Stubbe with an agreeable sense of humour and wit. Worden ignores all these solid achievements, which seem to me to throw a good deal of new light on the period.

Dr Worden rightly says that "ironic and ambivalent writing in Restoration political literature is a pregnant subject in both literary and political history, well worth exploring...". Jacob's exploration seems to me an excellent beginning. Worden surely dismisses the censorship as "an obstacle which seems to have worried most seventeenth-century writers less than it exercises some of their twentieth-century historians". How does he know that? Because the censorship was not openly attacked? How could it have been? For anyone who wanted to say really unorthodox things the censorship posed a real problem. Jacob for the first time does full justice to Stubbe's magnificent *Gibbonian Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism*. Its fundamental attack on orthodox Christianity shows that Stubbe had systematic thoughts which he dared not publish.

Whether Jacob has said the last word on Stubbe I doubt. But no one who has read his book can dismiss Stubbe as a turncoat, nor can think quite the same again about the conditions in which literature was produced during the Restoration period. Jacob's book should be welcomed with the respect due to an established expert in seventeenth-century intellectual history, and with the generosity which historians owe to any research which upsets their established certainties. It would be as foolish for me to dismiss Dr Worden's admirable work on Stubbe because I think he has got Toland wrong as it is for him to dismiss Jacob because he dares some of his conclusions.

CHRISTOPHER HILL,
Woodway House, Sibford Ferris,
Banbury, Oxfordshire.

Czeslaw Milosz

Sir, - I would like to correct the statement of Henry Clifford in his review of Czeslaw Milosz's *The Winner of Poetry* (September 23) concerning the killing of a water snake. In reality it has to do with the common "ringed snake of Europe, *Thaloudon natrix*", which the Poles call *zaskronka* and the Lithuanians *zelsys*.
LEONARDAS V. GERULAITIS,
Department of History, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan 48063.

Schopenhauer

Sir, - I'm not surprised at the anger of Bryan Magee's response (Letters, September 23) to my review of his book *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (September 9). Alternative possible reactions to it would clearly have been much less desirable from his point of view. However, since he has made grave charges against me, it is my duty to reply to them; though that is not easy, since his letter is almost wholly unresponsive. He says I misquote him, but gives no instances. I have checked all my references - I included page-numbers in my review so that your readers could do the same - and I find that I have, regrettably, made a couple of very small slips in transcribing quotations, from pages 34 and 314, but neither seems to me of the least significance. He says I distort his meaning, but not how. And so on. He says that there is "statement after statement" in my review "which - as a matter of fact, not opinion - is false". I don't understand the parenthesis. Either my statements are false or they aren't; opinion doesn't enter the matter.

The one case where Magee becomes specific is in claiming that he is only summarizing Schopenhauer's history of philosophy, when I say in my review that his (Magee's) account is "hideously inaccurate". This is not true. He certainly begins the account with "In Schopenhauer's view...". But two pages later, after summarizing Locke's epistemology, he writes, "even now, after three hundred years" (p. 58). Nor did Schopenhauer mention Russell, Wittgenstein, Ayer or Ryle, all of whom are referred to in Magee's summary. And his account of Hume on causation is both different from and much longer than Schopenhauer's, and contains the worst blunders. Furthermore, if Magee realized that Schopenhauer's account was inaccurate, he was duty-bound to say so, which he does not. If he didn't, so much the worse.

Magee asks why I should perpetrate such a misleading review, and claims that "the clue" is that I "always [start] from [my] own opinions and attitudes". Where else, one might wonder? Where does Magee start from? I compound this crime, it appears, by regarding "any respect in which an author differs from them as an affront to [me] personally". This is absurd, and suggests that I never have my mind changed about anything. Nor is the tone of my review in the least "personal" - I merely felt that I was reviewing a very bad book and that I should say so. As to Magee's references to roaring abusiveness, uncontained fury and craziness, I merely ask your readers to compare his letter with my review and see which is the calmer performance.

MICHAEL TANNER,
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Soviet Policy and Ideology

Sir, - Prologue: travel has delayed my reading of your August 26 issue which contains Otto Pick's review of my book, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*.
I have no complaint of a general kind against a review that seems fair-minded enough, but I was astonished to read that "Pick's analysis... is out of hand the notion that Soviet policy is motivated by ideology", and then, more emphatically, that "discount [be] ideological factor completely".

I do no such thing. Addressing the question at the very beginning of my book (pp. 2-4) I stress that ideological perspectives must shape perceptions of state interests, while state interests in turn affect ideological priorities.
What I dismiss "out of hand" is only the notion that ideological motives can be separated out, disembodied as it were, from the actual circumstances of a group of men who happen to be the rulers of the Soviet Union. Also dismissed is the possibility that any purpose can be served by speculating about the "ideological sincerity" of the Kremlin's rulers.

Specifically, on the question of Soviet support for foreign countries that happen to be persecuting their own Communists I wrote as follows (p. 4): "The Kremlin's justification was... that the worldwide enhancement of the faith sometimes imposes the cruel necessity of disregarding the welfare of some of its immediate representatives. And of course, the Kremlin would no more accept a distinction between the interests of the state, and those of the faith which the state upholds, than the rulers of Byzantium would have done."

Ideology, obviously, is important - but ideological motives on their own have no substance at all, any more than the imagined state interests of an imaginary non-Communist Soviet Union.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK,
4510 Drummond Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815.

'Consequences of Pragmatism'

Sir, - Because argument is not properly to be stuck into separate holes labelled "mathematical" and "literary", and "political", the argument *ad hominem* so natural to the courts should not be excluded even from the study. Proving that Catiline or Clodia were bad sorts, mostly by sneering, was essential to Cicero's practice, and can find a proper place even in philosophy. But the lengthy Oxonian sneers from Elizabeth Fricker and Michael Bacharach (Letters, August 26) directed (I gather from the spelling) in my direction make the point that you've got to know your *hominum*. Cicero dined with his. Fricker supposes that the beastly man from Iowa must wish to end philosophical conversation (as distinct from Philosophical Conversation) issuing orders to bystanders) and is among those economists who "realt the pressure to re-think the foundations of their discipline". Bacharach supposes much the same, attributing these ill-tempered opinions to some political thinker he sees and knows he doesn't like.

The main point of "The Rhetoric of Economics" (*Journal of Economic Literature*, June 1983) is that the impulse to Philosophize has been a bar in economics (and history and I imagine other places) to serious re-thinking of foundations and serious re-thinking of political economy. It stops real conversation, stopping for instance the high talk that the original review found so dreadful. It replaces wide conversation on the point with narrow Method off it. The result is Marxist economists who will not reply to market arguments because their Philosophy of History tells them they do not have to; or Chicago economists (appalling brutes) who will not reply to imperfect-market arguments because their Epistemology tells them they do not have to.

The problem is apparent in the letters. Fricker, a philosopher it would seem (I haven't dined with her), declares a state of scientific emergency, "an urgent need for scientists and philosophers to collaborate". I testify as a bruised victim of Methodology-crazed economists that her patient about the harvest from having them "work in harness". The example of Bacharach, an economist it would seem, is instructive: we hear mainly from him some very strong words about what is called in the trade "rational expectations". Whence the strong words? How has Bacharach achieved the confidence to deliver judgments on how economies of many millions of sentient souls behave? By saying he. Epistemology. My word. From true right reason, unalloyed we will know the world.

It is the pursuit from the altar of an epistemological perpetual motion machine that Richard Rorty, who does philosophy, criticized in Philosophy. Economics the imperatives of Epistemologies derived from this unfortunate activity liberate their seriously to the obligation to listen seriously to the reasons of others. Consider, has Philosophy (as distinct from philosophy) encouraged the

conversations of Western civilization, except its own? One doubts that Fricker converses with Hahnemann (not to speak of Dewey) or Bacharach with Friedman (not to speak of von Mises). These people are so inconveniently foreign in their Epistemological rules. Whatever is the point of rules that stop conversation?

DONALD N. McCLOSKEY,
Department of Economics,
University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242.

St Giles' Fair

Sir, - At least one regular reader has appreciated your photograph (September 16, p. 976) of the Bible Stall at St Giles' Fair, Oxford. If, however, it does date from the 1880s, it can only be from 1889. The bearded young clergyman on the left is Charles Cashe, ordained as curate of St Aldate's in December 1888. The cleric on the right, with a moustache, is W. H. Griffith Thomas, curate of St Aldate's, 1889-96, and later Principal of Wycliffe Hall. It is not without significance that both these supporters of the "soul-saving" work associated with the stall had taken first-classes in theology at Oxford and became relatively well known as theologians.

The principal figure, in the middle, is probably George Wheelhouse, an old soldier who had become a Christian after leading an errant life in the army, and who subsequently worked as an evangelist in Oxford from 1870 until his death in 1901. He slept under the stall each night to prevent malicious damage by the opposition. This is a more interesting photograph, therefore, and also clearer, than the somewhat similar one (c.1895) reproduced in *Canon Christopher of St Aldate's, Oxford*, which shows Dr Cashe, slightly older, but not ex-Private Wheelhouse.

J. S. REYNOLDS,
The Rectory, Dry Sandford,
Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

Books from Argentina

Sir, - Charles King's anguished myopic view (Letters, September 23) of scholarship and humanity is founded on the all too typical pleasure felt by his sort for post-bellum bureaucracy and restructuring of international affairs in the hallowed cause of democracy.

A continuing state of war between Argentina and this country exists only in the minds of pedants, politicians and overgrown schoolboys: people who are notoriously suspicious of the essentially non-partisan nature of most scholarly activities, not to mention their depth and erudition. Hence the perverse delight experienced (though camouflaged by the usual veneer of moral justification, righteous indignation etc) when the opportunity presents itself (in the form of packing cases and parcels) to drag scholarship into their ignorant and awful arms, and impound it.

MICHAEL V. HOWLETT,
6 St Ethelbert Street, Hereford.

The Hysterical Women's Movement

Sir, - I have read the correspondence you have published under the heading of "The Hysterical Women's Movement", with interest, and a growing perplexity.

When I invited four poets, Dannie Abse, Patricia Beer, Gavin Ewart and Craig Raine, to read their own poems in New York earlier this year, I was under the impression that one of the four was a woman. Was I mistaken?

CHARLES OSBORNE,
Literature Department, Arts Council of Great Britain, 105 Piccadilly, London W1.

Documents on Microfilm

Sir, - Julie Hankey's article (September 2) about theatre history in microfilm has prompted the expression of a grievance some of us feel about a recent change of policy in the British Library. As a result of this, readers wishing to consult seventeenth-century pamphlets had to be offered a microfilm instead of the original document. In addition to the disadvantages of microfilm expounded by Ms Hankey, there is one peculiar to the student of this period: many of the innumerable pamphlets are difficult to trace. The abbreviated titles given in STC and Wing are rarely adequate to elucidate the subject covered, and even if one knows the title of a document it is often difficult to track it down. In the past the researcher was much assisted in his quest by the fact that the British Library copies of such ephemera were bound in large collections, some of which through knowledge of one title sometimes disclosed others previously unknown. That advantage is now lost. It is understandable that the Library is concerned about the condition of its older material, but scholars will miss the less wish that access to it was still possible.

J. K. HORSEFIELD,
1 Palissy House, 37 Clarendon Road, Carisbrooke, Newport, Isle of Wight.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Sir, - Mark Blackett-Ord (Letters, August 26) objects to my review (August 5) of his biography of the Duke of Wharfedale, in which I wrote that he concocts an absurd fiction of a passionate love affair between the Duke and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Rather than quote at length, I simply ask him to reread in Lady Mary's letters to be sister the four passages which mention the Duke: the letter of November 1724 in my edition of her *Complete Letters* (1965-67), II, 42; that of December 1724, I, 44 - where she is clearly not in the Duke's company; and that of February 1725, I, 45; and that of June 1725, I, 52-53. He will then see that the "intimacy" of Lady Mary and the Duke took place at the writing table and not in bed. And for an understanding of the social and literary milieu they shared, where scandalous vices circulated clandestinely and encouraged quarrels, let him read all of Lady Mary's letters of the 1720s as well as the correspondence of Pope, Swift and Lady Suffolk.

ROBERT HALSBAND,
17 Clarendon Court, Clarendon Grove, London SW7.

The Messina Conference

Sir, - Whilst I hesitate to cast swords with so eminent a debater of "national personality" as Lord Barzil, whose book *The Impossible Europeans* was reviewed by Stanley Johnson in your issue of August 19, I venture to state that the reason why "Britania missed the bus at Messina" is more down-to-earth.

The representatives of the nations concerned meeting at Messina were by no means unanimous on their first encounter. The United Kingdom was represented by two senior civil servants who reported back to government that they saw no prospect of unanimity or agreement on the subject of a Common Market. As a result of this report, which is joyfully referred to in the civil service circles under the name of the authors - the British Government ceased to take the negotiations seriously or to take part in them. When interest was re-aroused, it was too late.

NORMAN OILDER,
Zoutmanstraat 68, 2518 The Hague, The Netherlands.

In Paul Morgan's letter of September 16 on Henry Stubbe "1664" in line 14 should have read "1662".

TLS Children's books

Celebrating the virtues of childhood

Zachary Leader

GREG MATTHEWS
The Further Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
415pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0353 34554 1

PAUL BAENOE (Editor)
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain: A facsimile of the author's holograph manuscript.
Volume 1 - 471pp.
Volume 2 - 444pp.
Frederick, Maryland: University Publications, D.C. Georgetown University Library: \$120 the set

GUY CARDWELL (Editor)
Mark Twain: Mississippi Writers: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Life on the Mississippi; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Pudd'nhead Wilson.
104pp. New York: The Library of America, \$25.
094050 070

What makes a book about children a children's book? Mark Twain was clear that the prime subjects of his fiction were "Boyhood and Youth"; about his audience he was less clear. "It is not a boy's book at all", he wrote of *Tom Sawyer* in 1875, "it will only be read by adults. It is only written for adults." Later in the same year, though, he confessed to W. D. Howells that "Mrs Clemens decides with you... the book should be a book for boys, pure and simple - and so do I. It is surely the correct idea." Twain also thought *Huckleberry Finn* suitable for boys, though this was not an opinion shared by most of the novel's original audience. "If Mr Clemens cannot think of anything better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he had best stop writing for them", complained Louisa May Alcott; while the Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts banned *Huck* entirely - thus boosting its sales.

The question of propriety - including sexual propriety - is an important one in distinguishing between books for and about children, and it will come up again in discussion of Greg Matthews's artful and affectionate new sequel to *Huck Finn*. But a more basic criterion can be used for such a distinction, at least for a large number of books. Up to the end of the eighteenth century the dominant culture was Calvinist, influences on children's literature and educational theory were Calvinist and Lockean, often in combination, as in the hymns of Isaac Watts. To the Calvinist,

children are naturally depraved, their seeming innocence is a deceptive enticement. "Thoughtless they act 'thold serpent's part", writes Watts in "On the Hazard of Loving the Children". What tempting things they be! Lord, how they twine about our heart, And draw it off from thee! "Thoughtless", here, means pre-rational and impulsive as well as innocent, and recalls Locke's influence over Watts. To the Lockean, the child is not innately or originally sinful. "Of

men." Children, therefore, because they are least tempted and corrupted by civilization, are types or models of the natural goodness and nobility that we as civilized adults have lost. Their qualities are to be celebrated rather than deplored.

Tom Sawyer and *Huck Finn*, like the majority of today's books for and about children, belong to this third, more radical strain: they celebrate the distinctive virtues of childhood. Among the features they ask us to recall and admire in the character and

between the literary needs of children and those of adults. The childhood virtues Twain wants his adult readers to recall, childhood vulnerabilities. Children, however, want no part of their vulnerabilities, nor are they much interested in retaining (they can hardly return to) their childlikeness. Children, it could be argued, want mastery, which they equate with maturity. This is why they so often ape adults in their play; why superheroes and dressing up figure so prominently in their enter-

cleverness and tact of its allusions, for instance, or the astuteness of its treatment of the relations between Huck and Pap) are overwhelmed by essentially childlike ones, in particular those taken in heroic adventures and adventures.

"I reckon I got to light out for the Territory", concludes *Huck Finn*. "Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and civilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before." Though these lines provide the initial premise for *The Further Adventures*, Matthews offers motives of his own. To begin with, Huck and Jim have been unjustly accused of Judge Thatcher's murder. Then there's the date: 1849, the year of the Gold Rush. California offers freedom, wealth, and adventure. It also offers a logical conclusion to the journeying, of a sort that eluded Twain himself, though hardly to the original novel's detriment (nothing here rivals the rich suggestiveness of Huck and Jim drifting down into slavery).

The dangers Huck and Jim encounter on the frontier involve Indians, outraged citizens, cholera, starvation, trigger-happy gunmen, madmen, and drunks. Though these adventures unfold episodically, as in Twain's novels, there's little sense of drift or aimlessness - of the arbitrary or the picaresque - about the narrative. In part, this is a product of Matthews's care with geography; we always know where we are and how much progress has been made in the journey West.

The novel is less satisfying, as one would expect, in its treatment of the relation between Huck and Jim. The sweetness and intimacy of that relation in *Huck Finn* is central to its achievement (as are comparable moments of intimacy in the relation between Tom and the Widow Douglas in *Tom Sawyer*). In *The Further Adventures* Jim is a more distant, dignified figure (Matthews provides reasons for this), and the tenderness of his and Huck's feelings towards each other are often assumed rather than expressed; Huck is no longer "chile" or "honey", for instance. Twain deeply valued such openness of expression, and resented its absence in his own childhood. "I was born reserved as to endearments of speech and caresses", he wrote of his upbringing in the *Autobiography*. In a truly free childhood, his fiction implies, one lived outside civilization ("the root of all evil"), such openness, though vulnerable, is possible.

Matthews may well share this conviction or hope, but it is not a major concern of his novel. His creative energies are focused elsewhere, principally on a host of memorably



A delivery of medicines "from the chemist up the road", a drawing by Rudyard Kipling on a letter sent to a friend's daughter. Who was suffering from mumps. The drawing, which is in the Berg Collection in New York, is reproduced in "O Beloved Kids": Rudyard Kipling's Letters to his Children, edited by Elliot L. Gilbert (225pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95. 0 297 78296 7), which will be published on October 17.

all the men we meet with", writes Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. "Nine parts of Ten are what they are, Good or Evil, useful or not, by their education." In Blake's words, from the straw-man Argument to the first of his two tracts of 1788 entitled or sophisticated: the free and open expression of feeling; and trust. These last two qualities recall the vulnerability both of childhood and of children, and account in part for the faint but characteristic note of sadness or regret - the nostalgic note - sounded not only in the darker and more profound *Huck Finn* but in *Tom Sawyer* as well. Though *Tom Sawyer* is intended "primarily for the entertainment of boys and girls", writes Twain in his Preface, "I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in."

The quiet affection expressed in this passage is for an endearing but inevitably vulnerable innocence, and it hints at a possible incompatibility

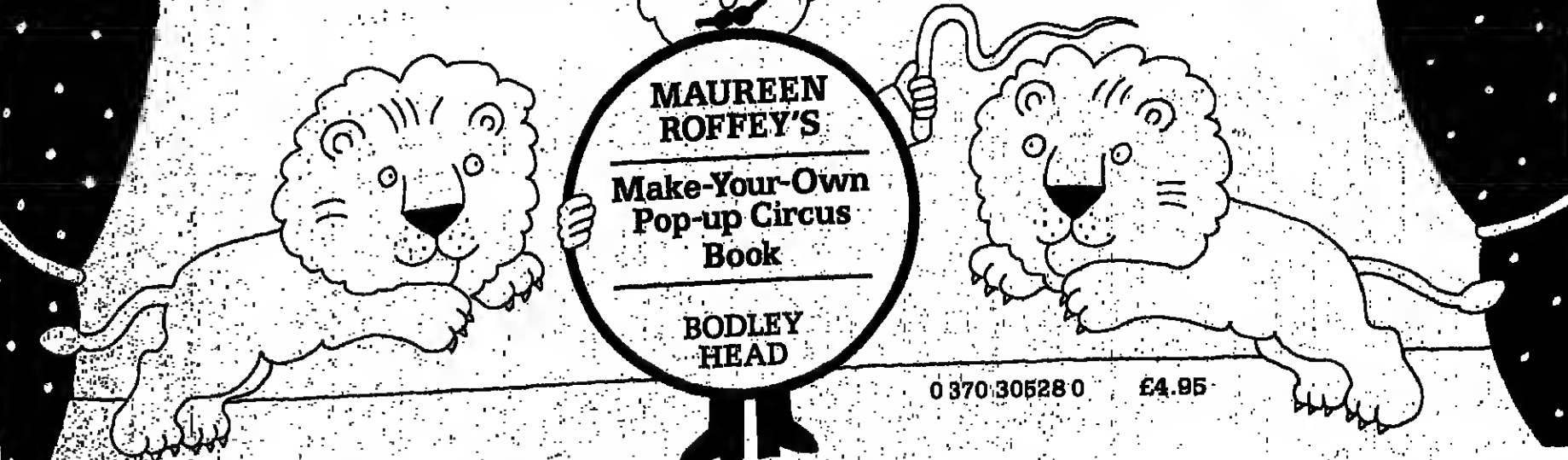
behaviour of children are the heart or instinct, as opposed to the conscience, which is seen as socially constructed; the imagination (though Twain would want imagination distinguished from an aspect of "fancy"); the simple and unaffected as opposed to the civilized or sophisticated; the free and open expression of feeling; and trust. These last two qualities recall the vulnerability both of childhood and of children, and account in part for the faint but characteristic note of sadness or regret - the nostalgic note - sounded not only in the darker and more profound *Huck Finn* but in *Tom Sawyer* as well. Though *Tom Sawyer* is intended "primarily for the entertainment of boys and girls", writes Twain in his Preface, "I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in."

Though Mark Twain was brought up in a Calvinist tradition, and lived in a culture in which children's books were predominantly "improving" (a post-Lockean term, like "Model Child"), his boys' books reflect a third and increasingly influential strain, one frequently traced to Rousseau, but deriving ultimately from what has been identified as a long "thin" tradition of Hebrew and Christian thought. According to this tradition (I quote from the first page of *Ennui*): "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature, but it degenerates in the hands of

man. That they also love stories about children (Samuel Johnson seems to us simply wrong when he declares that "Babies do not want to hear about other babies") is no contradiction; such stories need not always or necessarily recall childhood limitations.

Huck Finn and *Tom Sawyer* are old and proven favourites of the young, but they also, especially *Huck*, express feelings and needs which are fundamentally adult. As juvenile books, they're "all mixed up and splendid", to quote Huck. Greg Matthews's *The Further Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, though also splendid, seems to me to be much more exclusively in tune with childlike feelings, despite being issued for grown-ups. Though many of Twain's adult themes are retained, and sometimes cleverly developed (as when Jim is driven almost mad by prejudice), there's something self-consciously "worked up" about them. They are part of this novel's homage, of a piece with its skilful handling of dialects. *The Further Adventures*, though, is more than parody or tribute; it has a life and energy of its own, and its adult pleasures and interests (the

Make your own pop-up circus!



Growing pains

Judith Elkin

MARY POPE OSBORNE

Run, Run, As Fast As You Can
Patrick Hardy. £4.95.
0 7444 0021 X

SANDY ASHER

Things Are Seldom What They Seem
Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 03260 X

These two novels, both set in America, tackle a number of problems: sibling rivalry; relationships, strained or otherwise, with family and friends of both sexes; and an adolescent concern with popularity and status.

Run, Run, As Fast As You Can is for readers of eleven and over. When her family move house, Hallie is desperate to be accepted by the three most popular girls in her class. They are physically attractive and well-developed girls with boyfriends and a degree of sophistication which is new to Hallie. They encourage her, then cruelly reject her. Devastated, Hallie turns to her eight-year-old brother Mickey for comfort, but Mickey is found to be fatally ill with cancer. Slowly Hallie realizes how superficial her forced relationship with her friends was, and how shallow were their ideals. Above all, she realizes too late the depth of her love for Mickey. Mickey's death, at the end of the book, is handled compassionately, though without sentimentality.

Hallie's is a moving story but the author does not give equal weight to the two main elements. If Hallie's life at school had been described in more detail, the contrast with the security she finds at home would have been more effective. The acceptance and rejection by the "in-group" are dealt with rather briefly. Similarly more could have been made of Hallie's

relationship with her unappealing next-door-neighbour Lancy since this forms a further contrast: setting the worthlessness of the glamorous in-group against Lancy's caring concern. The portrait of a girl caught at the difficult age between childhood and adolescence, wanting to play childish games yet at the same time to be seen as mature and confident is well drawn and Hallie's "deep and suffocating" fear of discovering that her brother is very ill and of seeing his dead body is convincing.

In *Things Are Seldom What They Seem*, thirteen-year-old Debbie is worried about starting at Senior High School. Her elder sister Maggie, previously her confidante and mentor, has suddenly become aloof and distracted. At the beginning of term, all students have to choose their after-school activities and Debbie is chilled by the enthusiasm, verging on hysteria, that everyone displays for the drama coach Mr Carraway. Both Maggie and Debbie's best friend Karen spend long hours in private coaching sessions with him and the only sympathizer with Debbie's worry about this is Murray, a wise-cracking oddball, four inches shorter than she is. Thus begins a friendship which is realistically and amusingly developed.

The novel is written in a lively, chatty style, which reveals Debbie's growing anxieties and which provides the opportunity for much incidental humour. Debbie's relationship with Murray, her worry about being taller than him (practising "scrunching at the waist, hunching at the shoulders") and about not being physically attractive are revealed along with her more serious worries. Sandy Asher has an ability to sympathize with her characters and she portrays such things as an adolescent obsession with appearances in a way which will make them recognizable to young readers. The serious question of a teacher taking sexual advantage of a pupil is handled with delicacy.

Other childhoods

Nicholas Tucker

AIDAN CHAMBERS

The Present Takers
Bodley Head. £4.95.
0 370 30967 7

JUDY BLUME

Starring Sally J. Freedman As Herself
Heinemann. £5.95.
0 434 92886 0

It is not often that Judy Blume and Aidan Chambers are bracketed together except for the peculiar purposes of book reviewing. In this instance, however, they appear to have written books in each other's style. Chambers, on past form a thoughtful, innovative author for adolescents, has produced an orthodox school story about pre-teenage bullying, while Blume, the chronicler of emotional problems and early sex, has turned in a disarmingly low-key, reflective work describing childhood in post-war America. Neither quite succeeds, but both contain memorable passages and both deserve to be read.

The Present Takers concerns a playground protection racket run by nasty eleven-year-old primary school

girls, but the awkward title reflects the difficulty Chambers has in finding a prose style that is both convincing and fluent. As it is, the main characters rarely sound like younger children, either in what they say or how they say it, and none of them ever comes alive in the way that, for example, Bernard Ashley's characters do in his novels about school kondlums. The plot remains gripping enough, though, and the bully's final defeat comes as a relief, especially because other children's novels on this theme, such as *The Chocolate War*, end with the villains winning the day with the connivance of the teaching staff. In *The Present Takers*, the teachers, who are even more shadowy than the children, are apparently oblivious to what is going on in full view in the playground, let alone behind the bicycle sheds. The parents too seem curiously indecisive about confronting the bullies, and while this increases the tension, it is at the cost of credibility.

Starring Sally J. Freedman As Herself, as Judy Blume admits, is her most autobiographical novel yet, and while it may please readers of her own generation, I doubt if their children will be too taken with reminiscences about Bing Crosby, Esther Williams and the first television sets. The plot itself is slight, involving ten-year-old Sally's move from New Jersey to Miami Beach in the Winter of 1947.

She is accompanied by her Jewish mother and grandmother - both vivid, affectionate portraits, but unfortunately taken from the background and made into a large part of the main action simply because nothing much else ever happens. Those incidents that do occur are all determinedly domestic, such as the excitement of the first kiss and an amusing initial encounter with the boys of life. (This ends with Sally writing enthusiastically to her newly pregnant Aunt Betty, "Congratulations! I'm very glad to hear that Uncle Jack got the seed planted at last!")

It is a measure of Blume's skill that this generally unadventurous story never descends into bathos. The young fans in America and Canada who crowd bookshops whenever she appears and write long letters to her may miss the strong meat found in her other novels, yet still enjoy this book. For at best, Judy Blume's dialogue is always convincing and she has an accurate recall of the hopes and fears that once seemed important but now look trivial. Critics, such as myself, who have condemned her writing the past for its sensationalism, may like this present novel by an author who maintains a huge following with the young - this is an increasingly rare phenomenon among children's authors and not one to be dismissed lightly.

For and against

Nicole Irving

CATHERINE SEFTON

Island of the Strangers
Hamish Hamilton £5.25.
0 241 10914 0

In spite of a legend of shipwrecked Spaniards lured to their deaths by a xenophobic local hero and the exciting adventures of his modern-day disciples Catherine Sefton's *Island of the Strangers* tells an ordinary story set firmly in the present. Even the dramatic climax does not effect this ordinariness, since both the everyday events and the heroism are plausible.

The heroine Nora is perhaps about ten years old (although her readers might be nine or over) and lives in a small coastal community in Northern Ireland with her little brother and Stella, who acts as their mother. The children's father is away, attempting to organize a job for himself; they have, the reader can only guess, lost their real mother. Nearby and joined to the headland by an old and crumbling causeway is Inishnagall, or Island of the Strangers, so called because of the legend attached to it. It is said that one

of the unfortunate shipwrecked Spaniards miraculously escaped the massacre by turning himself into a gull, and that since that time the dead men can be heard sighing on the island. The handful of local children are wary of Inishnagall, if only because the tides and unstable rocks make it unsafe; they do however go blackberrying there.

When one day in October a minibus full of Belfast children on a school project arrives, Nora and her friends react, in keeping with local traditions, in an unfriendly manner. And when the Gobbers, or the "pack of city savages" call themselves, set up camp on Inishnagall, tempers rise. An expedition to save the blackberries from "trippers" is promptly mounted and there follows an occasionally violent feud. This is recounted by Nora, whose own position is not straightforward, since she refuses to subscribe to the dominant "if you're not-with-us-you're-against-us" faction.

Without a doubt, these adventures will satisfy any young reader hoping for vicarious excitement, but a finer satisfaction will be derived from Nora's account of them - and, indeed, simply from Nora. So successful is the realization of Nora as child-narrator that the reader, far from feeling an older, possibly patronizing hand at work, is soon immersed in her small

but complex world. At once thoughtful and impulsive, she is impatient but also ready to reflect - mostly she does this by not joining in any but violence and has the courage to accept being ostracized for her "cowardice".

Nora's thoughts are a curious mix of precision and vagueness, according to whether she herself is concerned, the connections between the legend of the island, the reception given to the Gobbers, and the problems of the outsider (which are also Stella's), grow clearer as Nora's own independence of mind is confirmed and she finds an encouraging echo in the similar attitude of a skinhead Gobber girl. On occasion, and more subtly still, Nora deliberately chooses to be unclear, for such are the vagaries of a growing sense of responsibility; this is apparent in her changing relationship with Stella. The reader also wonders whether her presence on Inishnagall during the feud is a show-down is really only due to her anxiety about her brother, as she would have us believe. The fact is that she grows up, but she is also still a child, loath to miss an adventure. Her adventures she has: it is only one of her lesser heroic deeds that she narrates, the legend of the escaped Spaniard - but of his sighing dead companion - but like everything in the book, this is only hinted at, and the reader's imagination can wander freely.

On safari

Jennifer Moody

VIVYEN ALCOCK

Travellers by Night
Methuen. £5.95.
0 416 44830 5

Elephants do not have to be white to be surplus to requirements. *Travellers by Night* deals with the pressing, though hardly routine, problem of what should happen to Tessie, an elderly performing elephant, when the circus that has sheltered her goes bankrupt. Vivien Alcock's previous three novels each contained an element of the supernatural, and *Travellers by Night* has added to the atmosphere in each. Her heroines have been down to earth girls, slightly at odds with parents who first about manage to make ends meet with a modest amount of moral dubiousness - the sort of parent whom the reader can like - but hardly admire. She has however come to rely less and less on the supernatural, and in *Travellers by Night* she has dispensed with it altogether. The adventures of Belle and Charlie are marked by the dangers

and fears of a recognizably real world. Belle and Charlie are cousins, brought up together by Belle's parents since Charlie's parents died at the age of five. They are circus children, whose parents are circus performers, whose lives have been entirely bounded by the "demanding" camaraderie of the big top and in whose education the skills and disciplines of light-trope and trapeze loom larger than those of scholarship. Some time before the beginning of the book, Belle, a gifted but somewhat boastful natural performer, had broken the basic rule of the circus and ventured onto the high wire without supervision or safety net. Her life was saved by Charlie's self-possession, but the fall ripped open her face. When we meet her she is bitter, has lost her head for heights and goes to great lengths to conceal the scarred side of her face. Charlie and the crowd all their spare time raising money for plastic surgery.

The circus folds. Belle's parents go to the United States to find work, while Belle and Charlie are destined to be cared for by an unknown aunt, and to attend an ordinary day school, when the elephant's aged trainer falls

seriously ill. Elephants are not known for the delicacy of their appetites, and soon, for her horror, Belle learns that the local knacker, made miserable by Tessie's plight, which echoes her own, in many ways, Belle plans to sell Tessie, in secret, the many tens of thousands to a safari park and, she hopes, against his own interests and better judgment, Charlie helps her. The second half of this tale is taken up with the difficulties encountered on the journey and its successive setbacks. The outward events are mirrored by changes in Belle's character: "concentration, determination, concentration, all help them toward the success, and the execution of the project in turn ousts her bitterness and self-consciousness. Fund-raising is a thing, but now the intention is to buy a safari park. Although they are odd moments when situation, character or dialogue fail to create a totally convincing picture, Alcock's book is stimulating, amusing and times moving. Charlie and Belle are characters of stature, matched in every way by complex, lovable Tessie.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

That shrinking feeling The house and its horrors

D. J. Enright

SUSAN PRICE

In A Nutshell
Faber. £5.95.
0 571 13075 5

It seems that Bogies, Vampires, Aliens and the like all descend from the class of rebel angels who were neither bad enough to be consigned to Hell nor good enough to remain in Heaven, and so got sent to that in-between place, Earth. Among them are the bogies (male) and Pouks (female), the tormentors of our poor mortals: fortunately they shrink a little every time they play a malicious trick, until eventually they vanish. As Brecht observed, "How wearing it is, to be wicked!"

This is the story of two very small agencies, a pack called Thumb and a pack called Thumbling, who annoy Oberon and are deprived of their magical powers. Imprisoned in walnut-shells, each is deposited with childless humans, and each is grateful enough to run away. In England, Thumbling, dumped in Denmark, escapes the North Sea in a broken eggshell. After many adventures - realistically recounted: the bad breath of humans is almost too much for these delicate creatures - they are reunited in a fresh skin. In accordance with modern theory, the female of the species shows herself more intelligent than the male, and with the help of birds whom they free from cages (quid pro quo the rule) they reach the land of the True Giants, where a change of diet transforms them into handsome seven-footers. They decide to join the

humans race on the grounds, hardly borne out here, that "humans seem happy most of the time".

The story is amply plotted and has its exciting and amusing passages, as when Thumbling fights off a rat with the help of a needle, and Thumb falls in with a troop of tin soldiers who could have come out of *Dad's Army*. Also its telling moments: the two believe badly when "in care", but their foster-parents expect this of children and "it made them feel like real parents". The account of an obnoxious boy forcing Thumb head first into the pink goo of a chocolate is enough to lower the rate of dental decay, temporarily at least.

Susan Price's one fault is that she is excessively conscientious. Determined not only to avoid but to be seen to avoid the well-trodden short cuts of fairyland, she feels obliged to show in somewhat dire detail how everything is achieved by strictly natural means. The mechanics of the final escape, utilizing the contents of a needlework-basket, are so complicated that the child capable of following this Midgits' DIY may also be capable of asking an awkward question. Since these creatures are very tiny, they must have done lots of very bad things - so why should we agitate ourselves over their fate?

But such a child is likely to have gathered that in this unfair world there is more joy over one delinquent juvenile who repents than over ninety and nine youthful paragons. For Thumb and Thumbling, now putatively married, do redeem themselves. They bring their grieving foster-parents together and all of them live happily and prosperously for quite some time after. And still - though of course they retain a slight edge over mere mortals - without the help of magic.

An animal anima

Nell Philip

PETER DICKINSON

Healer
Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 03314 2

"Bloody run thing, the human mind", says Pinkie's facile, indomitable Granddad. Pinkie is a healer: she stopped the pain in his leg. It is not even a real leg, but a phantom limb, a reminder of Alemeit. Granddad is talking to Pinkie's friend, Barry. Barry also knows of Pinkie's powers: she can calm his ferocious malignance. He knows, too, that the human mind is a bloody run thing. Inside his head, summoned to deal with the malignance but gradually invested with independent life, is a prowling, prowling secret creature he calls Bear. Later, when he is relying on Bear's instincts in his attempt to free Pinkie from a cult which manipulates her power, Bear calls him, naturally, "Bear".

Bear is the right weapon to use against the cult, founded by Pinkie's charismatic stepfather - half charlatan, half prophet. For "Bear" wasn't troubled by thoughts. Bear just felt. And in the costly "Harmony Session" Barry attends in the first chapter, the half and the sick, hoping to draw on Pinkie's power, are "supposed to be feeling, not thinking". Pinkie's

guessing about Bear is important, because it cuts across any simplistic application of science and mumbo-jumbo. She does have a gift, and her gift, Mr Freeman, though he does not exploit her, is sincere. In the difficulties encountered on the journey and its successive setbacks, the outward events are mirrored by changes in Belle's character: "concentration, determination, concentration, all help them toward the success, and the execution of the project in turn ousts her bitterness and self-consciousness. Fund-raising is a thing, but now the intention is to buy a safari park. Although they are odd moments when situation, character or dialogue fail to create a totally convincing picture, Alcock's book is stimulating, amusing and times moving. Charlie and Belle are characters of stature, matched in every way by complex, lovable Tessie.

In the event the media drop the "sex angle" for the much less rewarding "guard-dog-says-heath-crank" approach - but the fact that the book takes account of such a possible outcome is some indication of Dickinson's seriousness of purpose. Healer's thriller format is never allowed to make life simple; it is used to show ideas in action: to explore, among other things, the responsibilities of care. The book's tensions are not easily or tidily resolved; the prose is lucid, not the tale. The prose is lucid, unshowy and cleverly keeps the reader involved yet detached. Healer is not Dickinson at full strength, but it is a reminder, after his weak *The Seventh Raven*, of his adroitness in prodding his readers into engagement with the text, by using the techniques which are employed by better writers simply to make the pulse race.

A paperback edition of *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, with an introduction by Patricia Crampton, which was first published in 1973, will be published on October 20 by Routledge and Kegan Paul (£3.00p. £4.95. 0 7100 9998 3).

Alan Brownjohn

ELSIE McCUTCHEON

Summer of the Zepppelin
Dent. £5.95.
0 460 06133 X

MARY WESLEY

Haphazard House
Dent. £5.95.
0 460 06130 5

On a summer's day in 1918 a German prisoner-of-war leans over Artie in his room, and gives him a little card fashioned cleverly out of an old syrup tin. The goodheartedness of the deed, and the skill with which "German Bill" has made his toy, evoke the warmth and the sense of detail with which Elsie McCutcheon fills her second novel for children.

The book's heroine Elvira is twelve years old and she lives with an understandably moody (though not wicked) stepmother while her father is away at the war. She seeks refuge from the trouble house which becomes a sanctuary in her imagination. She befriends an orphan boy from a local home who sticks up for her at school, and the two of them make the old house a shared hide-out with a young German prisoner. There is a credible spy scare, and a mystery surrounding the loss of a golden statue; and after a

slowish start the story speeds on to a climax full of coincidence. Hardly anything in the situation or the plotting is entirely new and surprising, and the basic elements are even rather too familiar. What makes *Summer of the Zepppelin* different is an outstandingly accurate sense of day-to-day life in the period, including all the hopes and irrational fears of a small rural community which has to cope with the privations of wartime: rationing, menfolk missing at the front, women at work in munitions factories, the zepppelin suddenly appearing overhead.

The early slowness comes of McCutcheon's desire not only to get everything right, but also to put everything in. She tends to tell the background facts instead of binding them unobtrusively into the plot; and her zeal in presenting a whole village community results in a profusion of minor, undeveloped characters. But Elvira's wavering feelings about the war and about the German prisoner are most convincingly achieved; and the central relationship between the girl and her stepmother is developed with tact. The zepppelin of the title makes one alarming night-time appearance only, in order to hurry the several sub-plots into one joint denouement where there is just a little too much tidiness and happiness for the ending to be easily believed. The main purpose of the book, however, is to put the reader firmly into the skin of the bewildered and likeable Elvira and in this the author triumphantly succeeds.

In *Haphazard House* a deserted mansion in Devon is also a sanctuary, for the eccentric Fuller family, their pets and friends. Here father (a painter), mother (long-suffering housewife), Grandpa (a children's author) and Lisa (the narrator) find peace from the pressures of 1980s London. Mary Wesley charges her early chapters with a weird energy which carries the tale along swiftly through the amassing of an accidental fortune, a wild journey to the west in a Mini and a converted hearse, and the business of settling into an apparently haunted house.

In the last two-thirds of the novel, set in Haphazard House and the strangely deserted village nearby (in these parts "time is not steady"), the author maroons herself in a fantasy which slashes its own twists and turns only too patently, and takes much too long to unfold. Various macabre clues are dropped (though there is a fairly clear one as early as the epigraph of the book), and the explanation of all the oddity begins to seem, in retrospect, only too obvious. There is an imaginary garden at Haphazard House, and an imaginary toad in it, suggesting Marianne Moore's famous maxim about poetry. Either the garden or the toad in Wesley's novel ought to be more real for the reader's sympathy to be retained; one despite the novelist's skill with the chilling details of her sombre little comedy, reality has receded so far by the end that the fate of the Fullers ceases to be interesting.

Grand Guignol

Edward Blishen

ANTHONY HOROWITZ

The Devil's Door-bell
Patrick Hardy. £4.95.
0 7444 0007 4

How difficult the Gothic is. Though it needs to be said, it must not leave us thinking simply "Good Lord, how silly!". At the heart of the story is the desire to offer some glimpse of the reasonable world, as well as the bizarre circumstances in which our hero, or heroine, is trapped. It should be generally beyond belief, but soberly consistent within itself. And the climaxes should be as huge as possible: the House of Usher ought, physically, to fall, and much should be made of the event.

Anthony Horowitz certainly has big scenes. In the best of them, the hero, a cool thirteen-year-old, is trapped with a friend, a newspaper reporter and an eminent scientist in the Natural History Museum in London (the

scientist is, in fact more or less out of it, having been pierced with a spear from his own collection). A malign force is operating through the immense bones for which the institution is famous: skeletal pterodactyls are flying about the entrance hall, blindly in search of the hero, backed up by various fleshless dinosaurs. There is general and spectacular terror. The problem is that Horowitz has neglected several of the basic rules: so much of this sort of thing has been going on that it seems merely another outburst or Gothic hoo!-ho!-ho! Where anything is monstrous, we have no real sense of the enormity of this destruction of an important cultural landmark.

What it is about is yet another attempt by the oncent forces of evil to take over the world. The boy has fallen into the hands of a foster-mother, Elvira Crow, who has every reason to avoid surveillance by social workers. Even they might be alarmed by the mere name of her assistant, Mr Gangree, and suspect that this was a case of fostering with ultimate intention of human sacrifice. There is

an abandoned nuclear power station in a Yorkshire woodland, there are rumours of the father and mother of all Stonehenges, that once kept the nasties (who have immense unmanufactured black hands) at bay. The beastliest of the beastly mortals in the tale (a senior civil servant, naturally) sums it up in one of those interminable explanations that are a feature of Gothic climaxes: "The medieval witch slit throats. The twentieth-century witcher splits atoms. Sanity prevails, but it's difficult to be sure."

There are curious inconsistencies, too. Having been in the thick of various demented scenes, the journalist demurs at some surmise of the hero: "I deal in facts, not fantasies". Also: "One cannot help but think that a human sacrifice might have been obtained a great deal more easily, given the absence of scruple on the part of those whose enterprise requires one. There are verbal oddities here and there: "It was as if his life had come to a crossroads, and he had inadvertently taken a fork." Needless to say, I think young readers might enjoy every moment of it.

Happy endings

Marie-Rose Sibillot

JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND

Dan Alone
Kestrel. £5.95.
0 7226 58125

Dan Alone is the story of a boy living in a Northern town in the 1920s. Dan is eleven and a bit of a dreamer: he dreams of living in a happy family with loving father and mother (the same "Mum", but happier) and a little sister. Sadly, Dan is an only child, his father is a drunkard and never of home, Mum is young and pretty and has a "fancied" man, who is not particularly nice. Clearly, much is to be resolved.

In the Victorian story books Dan reads at his granddaddy's, realistic backgrounds of poverty and hunger co-exist with unlikely but felicitous reversals of fortune. Abandoned children with an unsalable sense of morality transform misers into kindly old people who turn out to be wealthy and long-lived relatives. Thus armed, the reader is both wary and expectant when Dan learns that the man he thought to be his father is not. High-minded Grandpa had arranged that

Jack Lunn should marry the ill-named Prue, who was pregnant by someone else. Who is Dan's father? Why will nobody tell the boy anything? Could his dream of a family now come true?

This is the first of a series of dramatic events in Dan's life. Some of these might have been precipitated by the revelation that Jack Lunn was not his father. Others can safely be attributed to chance. And always, there are strong parallels with the Victorian stories. Grandpa, a widower, remarries; Mum runs off with her man; Grandpa's new wife ill-treats Dan; Grandpa dies; the prospect of life with a shrewish Aunt Verity and her family is awful; and that of the children's home is even more awful. Dan escapes, clutching a picture of his mother. He fights to survive. In his search for his father, he briefly falls victim to the story-book solution, but life sharply reminds him of how real it is. He does, however, find a little sister figure in Olive, who happens to frequent the same hideout. He is adopted by a "family" of assorted crooks, pickpockets and prostitutes, and goes to work as a beggar. He lives amid complex moral misgivings for it is clear that some crooks are bad, some good, and some in between. Some events later, comes the happy ending which Dan has done so much to bring

about. Mum, newly discovered father and Olive are the shape the dream family takes. Thus, despite his well-founded doubts, Dan finds "You could have a happy ending", although good reader that he is, he recognizes that this ending involves "complications" unimaginable in a story.

The real story of a Dan might indeed have proved too pointlessly depressing and shapeless to be recognizable as a story. But John Rowe Townsend deliberately raises the problem of verisimilitude, and then, intent on edification, chases after every moral issue conceivably in Dan's world; pays careful attention to present attitudes as well as to historical detail, wraps nearly everything up and provides the happy ending. It might all be expected to appeal to a reasonably bright thirteen-year-old.

A new edition of John Rowe Townsend's *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature*, which was first published in 1965 and revised in 1974, has recently been reissued (Kestrel. £6.95. 0 7226 5466 9). The new edition contains two new chapters covering fiction, junior fiction, picture books and poetry since 1973.

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Gollancz

The child within: picture books 1

Kicki Moxon Browne

Helme Heine has a number of successful picture books to his credit. His hallmark is a brisk text, married to eccentric illustrations. In *The Most Wonderful Egg in the World*, three hens compete to see who can lay the best egg. The King, who sets up the competition, decides that the eggs are all wonderful in their different ways, and makes all three hens princesses by ceremoniously painting their crests with gold. One of the eggs is cubic and multicoloured, and the back cover shows the three hens admiring their chicks, one of them cubic and multicoloured. . . . Heine's approach is always refreshingly uncompromising. One has the feeling that he writes and paints for the child in himself, and so his books seem never to strike a false note. With picture books one is often conscious of the author trying hard to produce what will appeal to children, whereas the best authors (Sendak, for example) write only what appeals to themselves.

A strong "Let's write a children's book" feeling intrudes in *The King, the Cat and the Fiddle* which is co-written by Yehudi Menuhin and Christopher Hope. The story, involving a stupid king, a clever cat and a number of accountants who learn to play the violin, is wordy, pedantic and ponderously twinkling and the book would have benefited by being pared down to a third of its present length. The only interesting parts are some sketches of Menuhin doing his daily exercises, and - o bonus - the score of Puccini's *Allegro*, the "Far Elise" of the violin repertoire. However, the artwork is quite attractive, and the book is bound to sell well as a Christmas present for musical children.

Little Chicks' Mothers and All the Others describes briefly in verse and in reassuring tones some farm animals and their young giving just enough information for very young minds to understand the difference between chickens and ducks. The illustrations are in black and white, and the pictures strike a good balance between geometric shapes and realism. This is a mild and gentle book behind its rather aggressive-looking cover. Also in rhyme and informative in intention is *There's a Train Going by My Window*, the train being a dream-train which takes a little girl round the world every night to play with the camels in Egypt, the pandas in China, the penguins in the Hebrides, and so on. The illustrations are quite delightful, rich, detailed, and amusing.

The text, although potentially irritating because of the refrain of "chucka-chuk, chucka-choon and chucka-chuk", has a snap to it and follows the illustrations closely with one single idea per double-page spread: "The first stop in India / Chucka-chuk, chucka-chup / Where / I'll tickle the tigers / Till they say, 'We give up'".

Animals often appear as the grown-up heroes of a children's story, rather curiously living side by side with people. *The Dinosaur Who Wouldn't*

Get Up is about a dinosaur husband who won't get out of bed and tie himself a job. His dinosaur wife tries to drive him out of bed by making several animals from the Zoo and the pet shop come and jump on him, but all in vain. It is finally the smell of pancakes that lures him up, and off he goes to his interview and gets the job. One can only hope that this will save the couple from the fearsome urban squalor in which they live - all peeling, mouse-infested houses, demolition sites, barbed wire and barred shop windows, constantly on view to the town's exclusively human inhabitants.

The hero in *Hamnet and "The Pig Affair"* is a pig, who finds an old chest with a treasure map in his attic, sets off to find the treasure, is intercepted by a pirate ship (the pirates are frogs, whereas the other, peripheral characters are real people), loses the treasure in a game of snap, regains it and flees on the back of a kindly whale to the safety of his home again. The illustrations are very pretty, nostalgic and romantic; on the inside cover is the treasure map that Hamnet found, with intriguing place names. The text is

mock-pompous and arch, with many tired phrases such as "hapless pair" and "stricken vessel"; there are also a lot of very long words. However, the sequence of events of the story is straightforward, and possibly young children (the book is recommended for four to six year olds) will not mind only understanding part of the main drift. An element of the incomprehensible often seems to be an asset to a picture-book story.

There have been many picture-book editions of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. The story itself was written by Prokofiev as a framework for its real purpose which was to be a guide to the different sounds of orchestral instruments. Without the music the story is a little thin. However, this book would be a good adjunct to listening to the music. The illustrations have a racy, snap-shot quality, as people and creatures are caught in mid-movement, and the characters match the personality suggested by the music: Peter, fresh-faced and fearless; the wolf, sinister and brooding; and above all the wretched grandfather lumbering heavily across the pages.

The Writing on the Wall is Leon Garfield's second picture book version of an episode from the Bible, and, as in *King Nimrod's Tower*, the events are seen through the eyes of a child. Garfield uses rich poetic images and nipping rhythms with stirring eloquence. As in *King Nimrod's Tower*, the message in *The Writing on the Wall* is clearly that the meek shall inherit the earth; while Belshazzar is brought to justice for daring to eat out of God's holy golden bowl, a hungry cat, "tattered, one-eared, smelly old

HELME HEINE: *The Most Wonderful Egg in the World*. Dutton. £4.95. 0 460 06095 3.

YEHUDI MENUHIN and CHRISTOPHER HOPE: *The King, the Cat and the Fiddle*. Illustrated by Angela Barrett. Benn. £4.95. 0 510 00135 1.

WENNY KESSELMAN: *There's a Train Going by My Window*. Illustrated by Tony Chen. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.50. 0 340 33378 2.

MILORAD LOTON: *Little Chicks' Mothers and All the Others*. Illustrated by Mary Maki Rac. Kestrel. £5.50. 0 670 43113 3.

Murderer", is allowed to drink cream from the same bowl. The illustrations by Michael Bragg are elegant and subtle, accurately depicting the grubby, spill, drink straight from the barrel, pick their teeth with the knife and slouch. Garfield's broad heroic story-telling is a long way from the type of modern whimsy presented by Helme Heine, but what they have in common is the ability to communicate directly with children without falseness.

NAUMI RUSSELL: *The Dinosaur Who Wouldn't Get Up*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 25480 2.

TONY NIGHTINGALE: *Hamnet and "The Pig Affair"*. Illustrated by Sandy Nightingale. Dent. £4.50. 0 460 06140 2.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV: *Peter and the Wolf*. Illustrated by Charles Mikolajewicz. Granada. £3.95. 0246 12120 3.

LEON GARFIELD: *The Writing on the Wall*. Illustrated by Michael Bragg. Methuen. £4.50. 0 416 25830 1.

A suburban king

Richard Cobb

DAVID MCKEE

The Adventures of King Rollo: King Rollo and the New Shoes, King Rollo and the Birthday, King Rollo and the Bread, King Rollo and the Tree. 0 09 928250 5.

Further Adventures of King Rollo: King Rollo and the Dish, King Rollo and the Balloons, King Rollo and King Frank, King Rollo and the Search. 0 09 931 200 X.

King Rollo's Playground and other Stories: King Rollo and the Masks, King Rollo and the Playground, King Rollo and the Breakfast, King Rollo and the Dog. Andros Press. £3.95. 0 86004 036 9.

It is right that kings should have a lot of shoes. It must be a sign of kingship: we would not expect a king to be barefoot, that is only for a peasant (like a Farmer). And, of course, if they were barefoot, he would not have to do them up himself, that would be too much for a king.

King Rollo has to learn, and learn the hard way. But he must not be seen learning, he has to go and do it in his room, with the door shut. How proud he is to show Queen Gwen his new shoes, the shoes in two colours, so proud that he walks leaping backwards and raising his feet high so that he can admire the shoes, done up by himself. At least the Magician is able to save Cook's lovely cake from falling on the floor. King Rollo and his friend Queen Gwen march side by side, raising their feet high.

But, in the birthday story, he is not wearing lace-ups just as well, for they get him in such a state, he has temper tantrums and breaks things. But Cook is a bit interfering. It is such a pretty cake. Why should he have to point out that Cook is always barging in with useful suggestions? Of course, it is the best, he has to learn. Hamlet, as usual, is very helpful. It is a good idea to draw Queen Gwen on to him, another sign of monarchy, like

having lots of shoes. Queen Gwen has a very special dress for her birthday all billowy white flounces. And her other cards are all the same. Her house has a Gothic porch. King Rollo's house is detached, suburban, built in the 1930s, but with a modern kitchen.

Of course a king would want to show off his magic, he is part of the royal household, like the knight seen lurking somewhere, though he is not introduced. The roast chicken looks delicious, so does the chocolate cake, the ice-cream is huge and in two colours. But the Farmer is quite right to hold out for his original loaf of bread.

King Rollo likes roses; old kings do. But it is not right for kings - even little ones like King Rollo - to climb trees, unless, of course, the king is up the tree and has to hide, then the tree has to be leafy oak. Well, he has had plenty of warning, it is silly to want to climb to the very top, just showing off. He will know better next time. Cook warned him all along.

Cook is a bit self-satisfied. Even though there are two of them, they do a good job washing up, though it is a misuse of magic. King Rollo and even the Magician seem a bit afraid of Cook. The Magician looks like a professor; But, of course, he can use magic to remember things. Balloons are fun, especially when you blow them up and let the air out, better when they go bang; but King Rollo uses a pin, and this is naughty, it isn't really magic, it is cheating. But Cook, Hamlet and the Magician are frightened, and King Rollo laughs.

King Rollo has too many toys, he is rather spoilt: bat and ball, soldiers, bow and arrow, boxing gloves, train set, paint box and brushes. But he does not like tidying up his playroom and putting his toys away. He realizes, when he steps on some of them and breaks them, the next morning, that he should have listened to Cook.

King Rollo can be thoughtful. It is very kind to bring Cook's breakfast to her room, when she is ill. And he gets it all ready without breaking anything.

King Frank is back on a second visit, this time bringing with him a spotted dog. Of course it makes dirty paw marks all over the tiled carpet, so Cook is cross; then the spotted brute upsets the Magician's round table. So they take it out and meet other beastly dogs on their walk. They sit get very

tired; and King Rollo eats a huge tea; but he doesn't really like dogs, so everything is alright, and Hamlet, who joins in all his games, is relieved.

Queen Gwen is as naughty as King Rollo. It is very naughty to come up on Cook wearing those frightening masks. But the Magician has a much more frightening one, and King Rollo and Queen Gwen want to run away. They are only a little king and queen really. I don't think King Rollo can be King of Scotland; if he were, he would not have so many toys, balloons and shoes and several pairs of striped pyjamas. Kings of Scotland never have many things. But Cook must be Scottish, she is so good at cakes and scones. King Rollo is right to get cross with objects, he knows that they mean trouble. Queen Gwen lives quite near, but in a big house, within walking distance, in the same middle-class suburb.

King Frank is, I think, on the whole, a bad influence. Not only is he taller than King Rollo, who is so sensitive about his height, he introduces him to dogs and this upsets Hamlet who is one of the pillars of the Royal Household. Alao King Frank looks rather foreign and shifty. King Frank does not let out where he lives; he just turns up, on foot, so it cannot be very far. Perhaps he lives at the wrong end of town, or down a street of semi-detached houses with no trees in front of them; his clothes look rather raffish, with a hint of padded shoulders. They all wear medieval clothes and medieval shoes, even medieval lace-ups; Queen Gwen with several skirts, one on top of the other.

I feel I have got to know King Rollo and his friends. King Rollo is quite naughty and a bit wilful, but, with Cook around, he will learn; he always turns up just when things look like getting out of hand, and King Rollo and his friends are getting over-excited; and even the Magician cannot be relied upon to be his age, he forgets that he is wearing professional robes and glasses that make him look wise. They are just for show. Hamlet is an alert cat, ready for every sort of fun, very observant and entirely predictable. Nothing would ever get done in the house, were it not for Cook. She looks after the meals - King Rollo likes his turn, so does Queen Gwen (though she keeps her figure) - and keeps the house tidy. As long as she is around, things will get done. King Rollo is quite naughty and he knows it, he has a very knowing grin. I hope he gets into a lot more scrapes.

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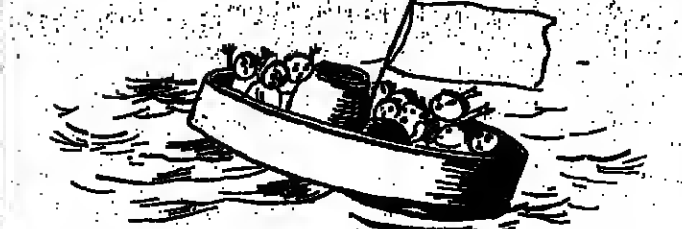
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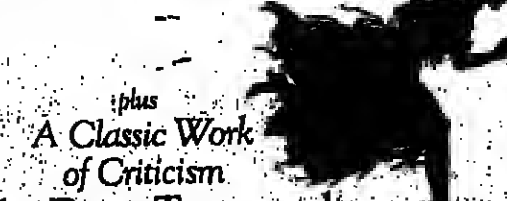
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The daily round: picture books 2

Sarah Wintle

Eight recent picture books concentrate on familiar and homely aspects of adult children's lives. The range of topics runs from such features of the daily round as having a bath or going to bed to less frequent but still surprising events like a first party or the arrival of a sibling. Subjects like this can be dull. They demand either the speed and precision of farce or a recognition of deeper feelings and an ability to present them with simplicity and humour. It seems that small children need domestic comedy, not *King Lear* or a social worker's report.

Holly Keller's *Too Big* combines sympathy with comedy in both its story and its illustrations. It is a variation on the old theme of the awfulness of being joined by a new baby. Keller's characters are plump grey creatures with scaly pink mouse tails, vole-like faces and mops of stringy hair. Baby Jake has some of the unformed, hairless, and hideous aspects of most new-born creatures - a nice touch of realism - and young Henry behaves with obstreperous self-pity. The book manages to be both touching and funny.

Going to a birthday party on your own for the first time is the surprisingly didactic subject of Shirley Hughes's new *Alfie* book. The party itself however, is splendidly done, especially the host Bernard, who is one of those tough-blonde three-year-olds who look like charming juvenile delinquents and behave accordingly. Bernard disconcertingly tosses Alfie's politely proffered present of crayons into the air, meanly pops everyone's soap bubbles, blows into his jelly with his straw, and insists on wearing a tiger

mask. But after a sticky start Alfie copes manfully, even plucking up courage to discard his comfort blanket to protect another child from the caddish Bernard. As usual the evocation of family life in the faintly shabby Victorian and Edwardian inner suburbs is beautifully done.

A wider range of potentially frightening experiences are illustrated and defused in Jan Ormerod's *Be Brave, Billy* which depicts the comically alternating fears of Billy and his little brother Billy. Starting school, Punch and Judy, climbing frames and swings, grazed knees, noisy trains, hotcuts and washes, dogs, geese, mice and the dark all get a pretty colour-washed illustration. The prettiness and the plucking off of one child against the other make the point clearly enough; Billy, for example, hates having his hair cut while Billy looks awed; Billy howls when her hair is washed and it is Billy's turn to laugh. The same illustrator's *Rhymes Around the Day* is equally gentle. It follows a family from getting up until bath and bed, providing rhymes to suit. These are well chosen, memorable and often good to shout:

Hockey, hockey, winky wum
How do you like your tittles done?
Stewed in whisky and bottled in rum,
Says the King of the Cannibal Islands.

Ten, Nine, Eight and *Doing the Washing*, are all also concerned with daily tasks, duties, and routines. *Ten, Nine, Eight*, which is for very small children, is a count down to bed (the cover picture includes a toy model of the space shuttle). Its atmosphere however is successfully non-explosive and cosy. It starts with its small black heroine's ten toes, pink-edged on a red carpet and ends with her peacefully wide-eyed in her cot. The whole book, with its variations on red, green, and

yellow, its unfussy boldness, and its use of counting and rhyme is attractive and original.

Doing the Washing provides more basic fun, especially in its portrayal of an obviously eaty household. The mother wears an emerald green skirt and purple tights and the house has bare floorboards and an Aga, but such details will interest parents more than children. The book's main theme is the muddle made by a dog and a toddler - all pleasant enough but fundamentally unstartling.

The last three books all have stories in which parental foibles and deficiencies are considered and found generally laughable, although behind *Alfie's* *Doing the Washing* lies a possibly harsher message. Alex's Mum, who may chat to her friends too much, but is on the whole pretty tolerant, is played off against Wendy's Mum who is a nagging spoilt-sport with a mean face and passion for cleanliness. The slight plot concerns an outing to the country in which Alex tears his jeans and gets covered in mud and blackberry juice, while poor Wendy is repressed by her mother and teased by her peers. Words and illustrations stick firmly to knock-about surface incidents.

Tommy Dobbie's mother is much too preoccupied with frenziedly

HOLLY KELLER: *Too Big*. Julia MacRae. £3.95. 0 86203 141 9.

SHIRLEY HUGHES: *Alfie Gives a Hand*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30521 3.

JAN ORMEROD: *Be Brave, Billy*. Dent. £4.50. 0 460 06093 7.

PAT THOMSON: *Rhymes around the Day*. Illustrated by Jan Ormerod. Kestrel. £4.50. 0 7226 5808 7.

MULLY BANG: *Ten Nine Eight*. Julia MacRae. £3.95. 0 86203 139 7.

SARAH GAOLAND: *Doing the Washing*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30948 8.

MARY DICKINSON: *Alfie's Outing*. Illustrated by Charlotte Fennell. Deutsch. £3.95. 0 235 97558 6.

RONNA and DAVID ARMSTRONG: *One Moonlit Night*. Deutsch. £4.95. 0 231 97540 3.

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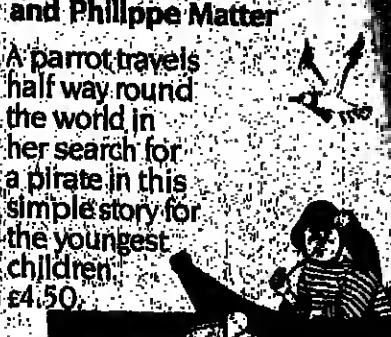
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The comic muse

Jan Pienkowski

ALAN CLARK and DAVID ASHFORD

The Comic Art of Roy Wilson
Midas Books, 12 Dewe Way,
Spelthorpe, Kent TN3 0NX. £9.95.
0 85936 283 3

COLIN McNAUGHTON

Crazy Bear
Helmemann, £4.95.
0 434 94992 2

"What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?" - what would Alice make of a whole generation of books consisting of nothing else? The comic book has been steadily gaining ground since Carroll's time and has now conquered not only children but undergraduates. It is in Oxford and Cambridge are any guide. In Paris, the Latin Quarter has long had lavish displays of beautifully produced hardback comic books which attract hundreds of academic browsers, presumably weaned on Tintin and Asterix and now ready for more sophisticated fare. The comic is now respectable.

The acceptance of the comic as a legitimate literary form in this country has been slow. The very success of comics as an "underground" form popular with children may, paradoxically, have stood in the way of adult acceptance. In my childhood comics were discouraged, if not forbidden, at home and in school. *Film Fun*, *The Beano* and *Dandy* were bought with precious pennies and read in secret, swapped with friends, and taken by greedy seniors. Even when that worthy product *Engle* appeared in the 1950s, it was banned in many schools. In my school Thursdays were a high-spot of the sixth-form week: all the prefects read each other to get at the first copy of *Engle*. We would then huddle over it and read the whole lot.

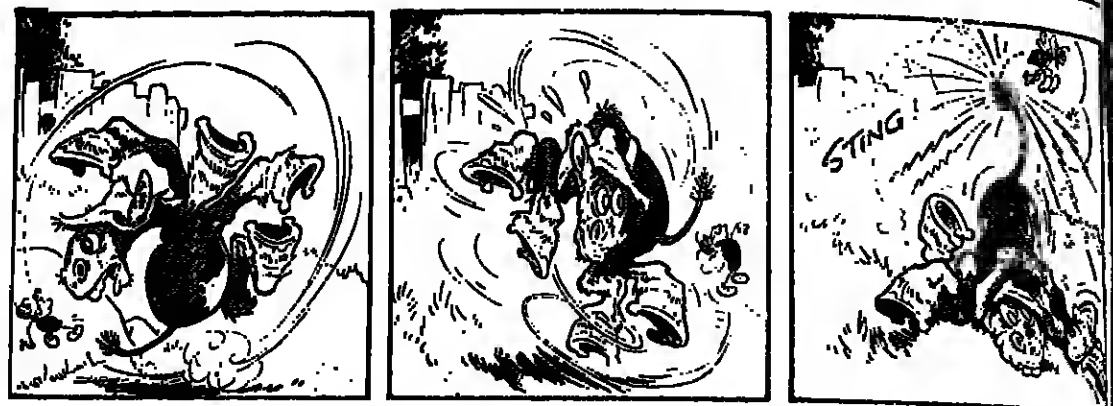
The comic art of Roy Wilson spans forty years of development of the strip cartoon from *Comic Cuts* 1926, through *Tip Top*, and *Wonder to Radio Fun*, *Film Fun* and *Buster*, 1964. Wilson was never credited - this was the fate of most British comic artists until the highly successful 2000 AD came along and changed all that, bringing our comics in line with those in the United States - but he put everything into his work just the same. His invention continued to create new characters reflecting the changing times. Gradually the long slabs of narrative under each frame began to disappear, their place taken by well-designed speech bubbles in Wilson's stylish lettering. The layouts are free from the rigour of a grid and graphic sound effects (chunk!, splat!, yeow!) play an important part in the overall design. Wilson's drawing is consistently accomplished, boiling with high spirits, never at a loss for ideas. One of his specialities is to convey violent movement in an almost

many picture books. But, because the comic has for so long been regarded as somehow trashy and unacceptable, its new authors have to re-discover its techniques. The barrier between the commercial comic and the conventional children's book has meant that artists have to start afresh instead of building on what is perhaps the richest comic tradition in the world.

It is to this great tradition that *The Comic Art of Roy Wilson* bears witness. Born in 1900 Wilson became apprenticed to a strip cartoon artist called Newhouse after the First World War. Newhouse influenced Wilson's style but Wilson soon developed his own powerful technique. He came out of his time and started to work under his own name in the late 1920s. He drew indefatigably, producing work which is not only of a very high standard but has a joyful exuberance as yet unequalled this side of the Atlantic (the American tradition deserves an article to itself). He continued to draw strip cartoons until 1964, the year before he died.

Alan Clark and David Ashford have clearly had great difficulty in deciding what to leave out from such a treasury of work, and have reproduced over eighty pages of complete strips. The majority of them have unfortunately had to be reduced and one cannot help wishing that the pictures were bigger and more inviting for, although the comic buff would be prepared to study the lot with a magnifying glass if need be, young readers may be put off. The colour work is so lovely that one longs to see more than the tantalizing glimpse offered by the colour plates and cover. The material is wonderful - the working drawings show a skill which only the Disney studios could equal. The finished frames burst at the seams with joie de vivre. The cover of the 1938 *Funny Wonder Annual* with Pitch and Toss (two manically grinning sailors) in a hall of distorting mirrors recalls the innovation of the Expressionists. The choreography of the rumbustious pas de deux between George, the Jolly Gee Gee and the Wally is both charming and spectacular.

The Comic Art of Roy Wilson spans forty years of development of the strip cartoon from *Comic Cuts* 1926, through *Tip Top*, and *Wonder to Radio Fun*, *Film Fun* and *Buster*, 1964. Wilson was never credited - this was the fate of most British comic artists until the highly successful 2000 AD came along and changed all that, bringing our comics in line with those in the United States - but he put everything into his work just the same. His invention continued to create new characters reflecting the changing times. Gradually the long slabs of narrative under each frame began to disappear, their place taken by well-designed speech bubbles in Wilson's stylish lettering. The layouts are free from the rigour of a grid and graphic sound effects (chunk!, splat!, yeow!) play an important part in the overall design. Wilson's drawing is consistently accomplished, boiling with high spirits, never at a loss for ideas. One of his specialities is to convey violent movement in an almost



George the Jolly Gee Gee, from the book reviewed here.

filmic manner - like a wild multiple exposure. His mastery of the human figure, foreshortening and exaggerated action never leaves him and in his final years, when Harry Secombe or Morecambe and Wise became his subjects, he manages to achieve remarkable likenesses as he places familiar figures in fantastic situations.

The same kind of appealing fantasy is the speciality of Colin McNaughton in *Crazy Bear*, a collection of four stories presented in a modified strip cartoon form. McNaughton is also, I suspect, a comic enthusiast and can perhaps be seen as a disciple of Wilson. Much of his work contains tongue-in-cheek references to a post-war childhood culture, redolent of Saturday matinees at the Odeon, the Bash Street Kids and Biffy the Bear. The big shiny red cover with its puny lettering and hypocrite picture of the boisterous bear hero is irresistible. The

four stories are the sort of fantasies that any child might succumb to in a boring algebra period, becoming in turn cowboy, Arctic explorer, pirate and Rock 'n' Roll star. The bear lives in a world populated by other animal characters (a useful device this, particularly in our multi-racial society) and a series of dramatic events are depicted in an equally adventurous design. The layouts are very varied: no two spreads are the same. The colour is similarly ambitious.

McNaughton's book is not a true comic but it keeps falling off the picture-book fence. The mixture of type-set narrative and hand-lettered dialogue is reminiscent of the early Wilson strips, but not as polished. It is almost as if the form is being reinvented from childhood memory. The spirited drawings which are in pen and watercolour are well served by first

class production and it would be difficult to imagine a child who would not be captivated by this comic. It is not a parent who would not accept it as an excellent picture book. By this stage in the march on, another generation of anxious adults. Thanks to Wilson's Colin McNaughton the comic is not only alive and well, but likely to be on strength to strength. The modern child, well-used to a succession of images responds to story in pictures and grasps the implications of some expression and grouping of figures with equal ease. The tradition is there, the audience is there, the challenge of dialogue is there. The new generation of authors and illustrators are interested in the potential of the comic book format. The next few years should be an explosion of high class comics.

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LITERARY CRITICISM

Poundings and Hoofings

Alan Jenkins

Shekspers, and depart at 8:45pm for Paris.

That Pound was falling in love with Dorothy Shakespeare accounts for some of this; yet it was also the kind of low life that suited him, at least for a while, and at any rate as long as he could play Ariel to Ford's Prospero. A relationship of mutual affection and respect developed which partook sufficiently of the ridiculous to merit a spoof in *Punch*, which introduced to its startled readers the poet Boaz Bobb and his aristocratic friend William Le Queux. Ford's "disciple and play-fellow", as R. A. Scott-Jones put it, was evidently happy to be just that until his own convictions - which had always had force - also began to take shape, and even if only by a succession of provisional strategies, improvised rules of thumb, the direction his writing must take emerged clear of the 1890s mist. By the time that process was complete, the disciple had virtually become the master - a transformation that occurred also in Pound's dealings with Yeats, though Pound boasted that that oddly deferential way of his that he "made his life" in London by visits of homage to the novelist and the poet alternately.

The process itself had begun with Ford performing what has been called "the most significant act of criticism of the first half of the century" in response to Pound's latest book, *Canto*. That work's "hyper-aesthetics" or "over-squeamishness", as Pound himself later put it, or according to Ford "the language", caused Ford to roll on the floor in agonized laughter. Pound took the point, abandoned his Wardour Street diction, pre-Raphaelite reveries and whimsically "historical" scenarios and started to write like - well, like Robert Browning. He also started to declare that he wanted poetry to be "austere, direct, free from emotional siltiness". Nothing, perhaps, could be farther from the nature of his own early masterpieces - "Near Perigord", say - but the seeker after the Poundian essence soon learns that Ford's presiding spirit is paradox, contradiction.

Contradiction in more than one sense, in fact: Donald Davie has given a lively account of Pound's years in Edwardian London, seeing him as a young hopeful who came looking for an *atelier*, seeking to apprentice himself to a master in the shape of Lawrence Binyon or Maurice Hewlett, and moving effortlessly on the fringes of a "privileged elite" in which the literary intellectual had direct access to the centres of power, by way of the conjugal bed as well as over the dinner table. But, faced with the unrelenting, frivolity of literary London, he threw up his hands in a place in this charmed circle by joining forces, instead, with Wyndham Lewis and *Blat*. Davie remarks:

If I ask what it was about this society which made Pound and also Lewis affront it more or less deliberately, to assure that its doors were closed to them, I think only one answer is possible: it was loathly vowed to the idea of the artist as amateur. . . . It is plain that in Mrs. Lowndes's society, writing, for instance, was conceived of as typically a spare-time activity. This wasn't, of course, the way Pound conceived of it at all. *Pound/Ford* reprints his classic essay "The Prose Tradition in Verse", originally a review of Ford's *Collected Poems*:

In a country in love with amateurs, in a country where the incompetent have such beautiful manners, and personalities so fragile and charming that one cannot bear to injure their feelings by the intrusion of competent criticism, it is well that one man should have a vision of perfection. . . .

The vision was Ford's, but also his "disciple", Pound's. There was, to the *Blat* connection, more than a wifely desire on Pound's part to *épater les bourgeois* on to the head that had been starving him. The point of *Blat*'s "bad no dampening activities", or mutual boasting of the letters are indeed most of Poundings and Hoofings, on each other's behalf and in the name of Art - the actual names

Wilfred Scawen Blunt, followed by Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, H. P. New suddenly the only worthwhile things were being done by Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, Eliot. There were losses as well as gains, and the realignment left Ford out in the cold: he took to calling Pound's triumphant *les jennes* and comparing himself to Coventry Patmore.

Ford, though in some ways "deracinated" and a maverick himself, and though the Hueffer did not become Ford until 1919, had acquired early the habit of looking and sounding the part; of trying to convince the world (in a way that later infuriated T. S. Eliot) that he was "an officer and an English gentleman". Yet he had managed to do this without sacrificing any of his "professionalism" - learned, rather, undisciplinably, from French models - in the writing of fiction, or his commitment to critical "standards". About Ford's own novels Pound was never very sure; as if by way of compensation, he was over-enthusiastic by the musical qualities of his poems, and generous towards the modernity of diction and approach he found in others. But for someone of Pound's clique-forming, propagandizing bent the issues were primarily polemical, a matter of instructing the world in how the new poetry was going to be written. It is here that Ford's "vision of perfection" inspired by Flaubert and Maupassant was most important to Pound; and it is here too, in their rapid exchange of hunches and convictions, that the early letters fascinate.

The influence of Ford is in fact satisfyingly clear in outline, but infuriatingly cloudy in its detail. Almost from the start we find Pound disapproving of Impressionism's emphasis on the visual, whereas "Poetry is in some odd way concerned with the specific gravity of things, with their nature"; with one hand Pound gives Ford credit for "gracious impressions", "low-toned", "literary-edited" *the SPEGIATOR* for three weeks and then was summarily rebuffed because his influence on him "too great", wrote Ford - had created a *Châli* of Comparative Literature for Ford and was eager that Pound should occupy it after him.

The job would actually have meant little more than being a kind of genius-in-residence, with very few teaching duties, much time for writing, and a regular income; Pound's response was at first cavalier, then downright testy, and one of the most touching and sympathetic letters in the book comes from a Ford at the end of his (very long) tether:

Dear Ezra, Do exercise a little imagination and try to understand the situation. I am an extremely sick man and your incomprehensible scrawls are a torture to me. . . . The situation is this: I am offering to give you my job at Olivet, because you have been making noises about Universities. For a quarter of a century and in obscure periodicals, Mr. Pound has stood as Censor of the Crab Street, clue-holder to Parnassus and Perseus for all chained Muses. Even allowing for a tinge of friendly irony, the fulsome note is not untypical. One wonders where the professionalism had gone, and what Pound thought of this kind of thing once the gratifying glow had died away.

It was, though, always Ford's critical sense, rather than critical writings, that Pound trusted; the latter, by 1923 (when *Imagisme* had long given way to the *Vorticism* and more, and the bywords were now *vigour* and *intensity*), were being impatiently, emphatically dismissed: "he bases his criticism on the eye, and almost solely on the eye. Nearly everything he says applies to things seen. It is the exact rendering of the visible image, the cabbage field seen, France seen from the cliffs."

So it goes on: Such "minor differences of opinion" as Lindbergh-Seyered calls these shenanigans "bad no dampening activities", or mutual boasting of the letters are indeed most of Poundings and Hoofings, on each other's behalf and in the name of Art - the actual names

whose causes are taken up are legion, those of Lewis, Joyce, Eliot, Gaudier-Brzeska. Cocteau only the best known among them. There are rancorous disagreements with publishers and editors of little-ish magazines, and continual worries about money. The worries, for Pound anyway, were not unconnected with the disagreements, and were the cost of his "integrity" (Ford was rather more conciliatory; in a sense more "professional", in fact). But on more than one occasion when Ford is forced into tentative requests for financial help from his impecunious ally, the cheque is despatched by return of post. Other requests - and equally, offers of help in other forms - had to wait longer, as a rule.

This was partly due to the fact that, as the letter-heads constantly remind us, both men spent a lot of their time moving about. From London Pound moved to Paris in 1920, then on to Rapallo in 1924-25. Ford camped to France from his fastnesses in Sussex, Red Ford and Coopers Cottage, some time in 1922, and from 1923 was permanently on the move between Paris, Toulon and the United States. Helped (and hindered) by Pound, he had also staged something of a comeback with *The Transatlantic Review* in 1924, which numbered Valéry, Joyce, Stein and Hemingway among its contributors; Ford-as-Editor was very much back in the swim of Parisian literary-and-social life. By the late 1920s he had pretty well decided that his future lay in America, where he was more highly respected than in England, and where he saw the only opportunity of earning a stable living for himself and his mistress(es) - mainly by lecturing. In a spirit of great generosity he encouraged Pound to do the same, and went to some lengths to secure a teaching post for him, rather randomly at first, then, all through 1936 and '37, at a progressive-sounding institution called Olivet College in Michigan. The principal of Olivet, Joseph Brewer - who once humorously sub-edited - or rather literally-edited the *SPEGIATOR* for three weeks and then was summarily rebuffed because his influence on him "too great", wrote Ford - had created a *Châli* of Comparative Literature for Ford and was eager that Pound should occupy it after him.

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from these, the whole world – and especially the United States – was evil, how could Pound accept a small slice of it when it was offered? And what could be achieved by bowing himself to the "YOKE" that he saw being "devised" by Oliver and Ford? If egomania and paranoia were at work here, there was also a good deal of the disappointed saviour, the proselytizer whose message had not got through. America had already wounded Pound once, as England was to do later; such things were not easily forgiven. All the same, and however familiar the story may be, we are pulled up short by worries that Pound thought worthy of imparting to Ford in 1938: "At any rate a Rothschild has been arrested but I am afraid they won't kill him."

One of the things that had come between the Edwardian Indian summer and the falling-off was the First World War. It rescues a few mentions in despatches here as do the details of the two men's *démenagements*, or what their various domiciles meant to them. 1915 was the crucial year. A section of *The Saddest Story* had been published in the first (1914) *Blast*, and *The Good Soldier*, as it became, was published entire in 1915; in August of that year Ford became a good soldier himself. Pound wrote jauntily to Harriet Monroe, "Hueffer up in town on leave yesterday. It will be a long time before we get anymore of his stuff, worse luck. He is looking twenty years younger and enjoying his work." The Tietjens books seem a long way off. In the same year Gaudier-Brzeska is killed, and Pound dilates to Felix Schelling: "We have lost one of the best young sculptors and the most promising. The arts will incur no worse loss from the war than this. One is rather obsessed with it."

Pound's uncharacteristic reluctance to go further than the surprising, though the remark has a numbing defensiveness about it. Earlier he had declared: "This war is possible, conflict between two forces almost equally detestable. At present the loathsome spirit of mediocrity cloaked in graft... One wonders if the war is only a stop gap. Only a few more years and the world stopped being enough, though, when a particular death or deaths touched Pound's own world, and his own feelings. It was about such things that he found it hardest to say anything at all. Charles Olson's view, gleaned many years afterwards during visits to Pound in St Elizabeth's, was that "Pound has never got over it... Gaudier's death is the source of his hate for contemporary England and America... In 1915, his attack on democracy got mixed up with Gaudier's death, and all his turn since has been revenge for that boy's death." Pound made a kind of "no more poetry after Auschwitz" statement when, in connection with Hardy, he said that the time has passed "when one could concede such emphasis to the individual ego and the personal sadness" yet his *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* can be read not just as "farewell and a settling of accounts" as Lindbergh-Seymour has it, but also as a personal elegy for Pound's London self and his friend Gaudier, written in the only way Pound thought permissible – beneath its subtly public utterance and its rhetoric of denunciation, the "personal sadness" can be caught.

Though it could hardly be about the war, *The Good Soldier* is heavy with the death of Gaudier. There are many deaths in the book, but it is Gaudier's death that is the most poignant. Pound's writing at moments seems to be a kind of "no more poetry after Auschwitz" statement when, in connection with Hardy, he said that the time has passed "when one could concede such emphasis to the individual ego and the personal sadness" yet his *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* can be read not just as "farewell and a settling of accounts" as Lindbergh-Seymour has it, but also as a personal elegy for Pound's London self and his friend Gaudier, written in the only way Pound thought permissible – beneath its subtly public utterance and its rhetoric of denunciation, the "personal sadness" can be caught.

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extraordinarily selective (and very American) reading of Henry James:

It is not a good frame of mind to get into – this preoccupation with Subject rather than rendering... There is the same tendency in your desire for STRONG STORY and in your objection to renderings of the man for FURNITURE... having not taste for brie-a-brac you hate to have to read about this passion... But it is one of the main passions of humanity... You might really, just as legitimately object to renderings of the passion of LOVE...

In a way, writing about "his" James, Pound had done just that; and he seems no more in touch with the subtlety and complexity of Ford's "renderings of the passion of LOVE" than he does with James's. In fact there is little even of narrowly literary interest in the letters from the late 1920s on. There are gestures towards magazines and editorial committees, campaigns on behalf of John Crowe Ransom and William Carlos Williams, more generosity from Ford, more recalcitrance from Pound. His heart, simply, was no longer in it; he had begun to look back on the battle of "isms" with the air of a literary historian. He had also, since settling in Rapallo, thrown himself into organizing a series of concerts and recitals, galvanizing local musical talent and interest (he had certainly not lost heart for publicity), drawing players and audiences from further afield. In all of this new activity, and in Pound's life from this time on, a major role was played by the violinist Olga Rudge. Pound's daughter by her, Mary de Rachewitz, has given in her memoir *Indiscretions* a vivid picture of their domestic circumstances: she speaks of

the stress of almost two years when he was pent up with two women who loved him, whom he loved, and who coldly hated each other. Whatever the civilized appearances, the polite behaviour and the facade in front of the whole world, their hatred and tension had permeated the house... Until then the attitude towards personal feelings had been somewhat Henry Jamesian: feelings are things other people have. One never spoke of them or showed them.

And "[Pound's] susceptibility to women (and theirs to him) was lifelong", thus Hugh Kenner. We find not a hint of the fact in these letters; feelings were things other people had, just as in the *Cantos* Pound's hell, far from being other people, or himself – as it was for Eliot – is, as Eliot put it, a hell for other people. To speak of the reality Mary de Rachewitz describes, the poetry has recourse to foreign languages (the ironic thing about such reticence is that it seems both quintessentially English and extremely un-English, yet Pound after 1920 declared an early unrelenting contempt for English habits of thought and feeling) and the misanthropic, or misrepresented, James as badly as he did Flaubert and Joyce. Pound had also his personal mythology, which appears with remarkable consistency in his work from the juvenilia of *Hilda's Book* to the *Cantos*, *Hilda Doolittle* (H.D., or "Dryad") in *An End to Torment* had written of its earliest stirrings, during her courtship with Pound in the orchards of Wyncote and the tree-house in her father's garden; Charles Tomlinson in his Clark lectures last year made illuminating connections between all this and a different kind of awakening, to Homer and Ovid, also making the point that Pound's writings at moments seem to be a kind of "no more poetry after Auschwitz" statement when, in connection with Hardy, he said that the time has passed "when one could concede such emphasis to the individual ego and the personal sadness" yet his *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* can be read not just as "farewell and a settling of accounts" as Lindbergh-Seymour has it, but also as a personal elegy for Pound's London self and his friend Gaudier, written in the only way Pound thought permissible – beneath its subtly public utterance and its rhetoric of denunciation, the "personal sadness" can be caught.

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he was an inveterate self-mythologizer, a man for whom the boundaries between memory and invention, the embellishment of an anecdote and the telling of lies, were often blurred. An unsurprising trait in a writer of fiction, it might be argued, and one that is subtly and inextricably bound up with the creation of "unreliable" narrators. But it is also possible to see that this mania for myths of the self had, in Ford, on element of covering his tracks. In many of his letters to Pound, certainly, we hear the voice of a self-created mythical creature, and anyone wishing to know what tracks had to be covered must go to other sources.

Pound would have answered "I am tracks". In his obituary Ford printed here Pound paid him this tribute: "That Ford was almost an *hollidic* few of his intimates can doubt. He felt until it paralyzed his efficient action, he saw quite distinctly the Venus immortal crossing the tram tracks." Nearly twenty years later the spirit of contradiction raises its head again, and in St Elizabeth's he revises the opinion: "The trouble with Fordie was that he couldn't see Venus crossin' the tram tracks." It sounds as if he's talking about himself, but isn't sure, the two of them having shared and differed so much. Whether Pound was almost an *hollidic* few of his readers can be quite confident; one problem is the need to connect feeling with a tram-track Venus in the first place, another that he was so often busy with efficient action that it paralyzed his feelings.

Readers who would measure the consequences of this for Pound's achievement must go to the poems and criticism. These letters make their contribution to literary history; after reading them we have a better idea of how Imaginism starting (in Hugh Kenner's words) as a "technical hygiene", came to mean "little more than a way of designating short *vers libre* poems in English", and how both of these were distinct in Pound's mind from his "doctrine of the image" – always closer to the Vortex than to mere pictorial representation: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time... We have to take Pound's word for it: the critical LIGHT during the years immediately pre-war in London shows not from Hulme but from Ford (Madox Ford) in so far as it fell on writing at all, and are not surprised to hear that 'THE EVENT of 1930-10 was Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford's 'English Review', and no greater condemnation of the utter filth of the whole social system of that time can be dug up than the fact that that review's passing out of his hands... No greater condemnation of the... the sublime assurance that only literature, finally, matters, is the dominant note throughout, apart from the odd politico-economic interlude.

The letters have been scrupulously edited and annotated by Brita Lindberg-Seymour, sometimes too scrupulously, as when she finds it necessary to inform us of "imagined Poetry" that "Pound asserted a 'gentle' editorial attitude", and sometimes not scrupulously enough: American readers, for example, might have liked to hear more about the satirical sheet *The Week*, an *un-Private Eye* edited by the young Claud Cockburn that Pound refers to in passing in a letter of June 1933. She has ransacked the archives of American universities for her material, most of which is published here for the first time (the essays and reviews are available elsewhere). There is one lively letter from Pound, when she declares that "Pound of course was one of the really great letter writers". He was nothing of the kind, and the "challenge" presented to translators and editors by his "eccentricities of spelling, punctuation, line arrangement, indentation etc." is more frequently an irritation to the reader, all too often we remember Ford's word for it: torture. Pound's silly affections – part and parcel of his letter-writing persona of Of Ex-aside, one of his remarks (1920) cannot help being a rather ironic note. "Any damn thing I put down is susceptible of his editor, may have served him not have wasted some of the letters to well. So far Pound has suffered more in this respect than has Ford; perhaps the latter's time has now come.

Ford's own life was not without complications, in respect of women other, and it has often been said that



Ford Madox Ford and Ezra Pound at Rapallo (from the book reviewed here)

In superlative degree

Adam Mars-Jones

FORD MADOX FORD

The English Novel: From the earliest days to the death of Joseph Conrad
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0 85635 480 5

In an age when literary criticism looks more and more like a closed subject, infinitely divorced from the practice of writing, it's refreshing and even reassuring to read a book of criticism by a remarkable and prolific novelist, and to find on every page passages of startling inanity. Perhaps the modish specialists have got it right after all. Bring on the diagrams! Bring on the technical terms!

Ford Madox Ford's short survey (first published in 1930) aims to offer "suggestions not dictata", but what it delivers is a mass of uncoordinated opinion, much of it masquerading as fact. "The French peasant", we learn at one point, "long ago evolved the rule that life is never either as good or as bad as one expects it to be, and so the French peasant, like every proper man, faces life with composure – and reads *Madame Bovary*, whilst the English, say, lawyer has never got beyond *The Three Musketeers*".

Convinced? Ford's tone is chatty and intimate, so that the reader can believe for whole phrases at a stretch – until the wrong notes become impossible to ignore – that a master class is in progress, with a mellow maestro presiding. Ford is certainly unbuttoned, but buttons aren't always such a bad idea.

Ford's categories overlap and change places, and his generalizations tend to cancel each other out. He lists, for example, without anything as pretentious as evidence, "the four most popular books the world over at any given moment since, say, eighteen-sixty", as the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Madame Bovary* (ha! ha! in part to the tireless efforts of French passants), and two semantically chasing works of egregious silliness. Yet a little later he asserts that Flaubert (whom he characterizes as a "buoyant and essentially optimistic figure") is "cast out of all French literary practices or inspirations today". Flaubert must therefore be adopted (to the fury of possessive French "peasants everywhere") as "an English novelist", just as the novel itself is equated by Ford with the English novel, less than a page after he has pronounced the Art of Writing to be an internationally co-operative affair.

Ford is properly acid about English writers who would rather be called gentlemen than artists, but his own cavalier fabrication of fact is only another way of taking pride in amateurism. Many of his sillinesses rebound against him, in his opinion the really significant point about Shakespeare is the fact that he never corrected his proofs. Ford deduces from this that Shakespeare was really most interested in bombast, and would have liked to write more verse in the

manner of *The Rape of Lucrece* than of turning out the complete masterpieces that popular demand.

If it's possible to recognize a writer's motives in this way, then he can easily be convicted of profound chit-chat to analysis, and even consistent prejudice. If *Vanity Fair* "the greatest work in the English language" (Chapter 1), then how can Captain Marryat be "the greatest of English writers" (Chapter 3)? Where does that leave the Englishman Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale*, which is "the greatest novel ever written" (Chapter 6)? Perhaps Ford cultivates a Shakespearean attitude towards proof, but if he doesn't want his reader to remember a hyperbole from one chapter to the next, what does he want?

He certainly wants to elevate a goodly crowd to the pinnacle of eminence. Of Richardson he writes: "know of no other figure in English literature – if it be not that of Thomas who so suggests the two opposite sides of the world – Holbein and Zuck." Is he perhaps the archetype of the writer of the critic; a series of little reviews that leads from a declarative opinion to a concluding exclamation, and justifies one set of prejudices by appealing to another, contrast of Bach, apparently, because he lacks Bach's "sense of the beauty of natural things". For Richardson, wouldn't you know it, if he saw one in this street.

How can Ford possibly recognize these superlatives? By calling writers "solitary figures" is necessary, to imply that comparison is impossible, or at least (since a critic who can compare anything to anything) inconceivable. "Solitary" is obviously a solitary figure, "like" in their different ways, "the spare or Smollett or the author of *Way of All Flesh*". Trilby, too, belongs to this crowd of loners. "Miss Austen – like Shakespeare and Richardson – stand on absolutely solid ground to the point where she learns to know, my study and to take the guilty pleasure of making friends whom her husband would not have liked."

So many outbursts of "burdened by responsibility to the past, the husband and inquisitiveness of his telephonic wife and mother, willing their children not to fall off cliffs and answering the telephone with 'I'm afraid he's not back yet'". Zoe is the afraid he's not back yet; "Zoe is the plain, even, light writer whose sadness and sense whine through the letters for each other and for the child. This looks like a warning presentation of the possibilities of women's lives and friendship, but the characters don't quite fill the idea. Finally, despite 'engaging and sympathetic' scenes, Frances stays too bloodless, and Zoe too breezy, for the connection to take place.

FICTION

Ascendancy in decline

Joy Grant

MOLLY KEANE

Time After Time

240pp. André Deutsch. £7.95.

0 233 97587 X

After a long silence, Molly Keane at the age of seventy-seven produced *Good Behaviour*, a novel of immense nerve that took a sardonic look at the manners and mores of the financially unimpaired Anglo-Irish gentry in the last half of this century. Now she offers *Time After Time* a darker comedy, both more bizarre and more schematic. An interplay between past and present is integral to the plot; flashbacks explain character and motive by reference to happenings in the 1920s and '30s (and incidentally enable the author to display her vivid, almost voluptuous sensory awareness of the accessories of civilized living – food, clothes, furnishings – both in the present and a bygone age).

The comedy focuses on the bleak aspects of human nature; Molly Keane's characters are experts in put-downs, let-downs and snubs. People live in a solipsistic world, pursuing private ends. "They know less than I know about each other," Molly Keane writes of two persons living under one roof. Sisters, moved by the sight of wild flowers, evade the expression of a shared joy:

a moment came and went when together they saw... the first sunny primroses, their pale golden lightening the dusk of the cold evening. "Ah, primroses," they both said it, pleasure hurrying their pulses together... But, because they feared a trite or sweet comment they turned their heads coldly aside from one another.

Adventures into affection end in betrayal. In this atmosphere most

tenderness is expended, not surprisingly, on pets.

One may be less than easy with humour consistently so "wicked", or tire a little of the derisory or caustic tone, yet from this unpromising material Molly Keane has fashioned excellent entertainment: *Time After Time* is an absorbing book.

The central characters are again impeccable Anglo-Irish gentry, the elderly Swifts – three sisters, April, May and "Baby" June, and their brother Jasper – who are obliged for financial reasons to live together in their servantless family mansion. They dislike each other: in uncordial proximity the sisters, while effortlessly and pointedly distinguishing the odours of their respective dogs, do not enter one another's bedrooms; conversation is gripping, spiteful and tart. With the exception of the eldest, the Swifts are single and virgin. April is an unregretful widow ("It's a thingamajig, you won't like it," her mother had told her at her wedding, and April never heard cause to disagree); in old age she strives to perpetuate her good looks with food fads and aids to beauty, although she has other, more questionable pastimes – secretly selling off the family antiques to a dealer who provides her with "grass". Jasper prepares elegant meals in his unhygienic kitchen (where the bread-board is his tom-cat's habitual seat), and dreams up extravagant plans for his garden; in spare moments he cuts ham sandwiches for a "pretty" fasting monk (the *louché* implications are misleading; the authoress seems to be indulging in Irish coddling at the expense of her own). May (the most subtly-drawn character and the most interesting), while enjoying a public reputation for restoring ceramics and arranging flowers, devotes more basic authors, pays scant attention to the process of aging; to Molly Keane, aging is clearly a mere incidental to living.

Does the Swifts' freakiness (Leda's daughter too is deformed) symbolize some terrible soul sickness afflicting the children of the Protestant Ascendancy? Or is it a joke in doubtful taste? Whatever the answer, Molly Keane persuades her reader, into shocked acceptance of most, though not all, of her story. In reading this very elderly authoress two thoughts occur. First, she is bang up to date, and (like some of her characters) tunes in to British radio to hear the latest "dreadful news from Ulster". "The Archers", "the awfulness of Robin Day". Second, unlike some younger authors, she pays scant attention to the process of aging; to Molly Keane, aging is clearly a mere incidental to living.

Bereft and burdened

Joanna Motion

PAOLO LIVELY

Perfect Happiness

240pp. Heinemann. £7.95.

0 24 4240 3

The happiness in Frances Brooklyn's *Perfect Happiness* is as perfect as perfection. It belongs to a tense which is fixed as just by the moment of her husband's death. After that, unhappiness becomes "a total occupation" with which other emotions and events, and the claims of her children and friends, must coexist. Or so it seems at the beginning of her bereavement.

The progress of *Perfect Happiness* follows the irregular chronology of memory, disturbed by excursions into history. Paolo Lively presents the mother and embroilates other people. In time the patient will recover, though not to her former health. Frances moves through panic, loneliness and a sort of numbness to the point where she learns to live positively in the singular (my kind of study and to take the guilty pleasure of making friends whom her husband would not have liked).

So many outbursts of "burdened by responsibility to the past, the husband and inquisitiveness of his telephonic wife and mother, willing their children not to fall off cliffs and answering the telephone with 'I'm afraid he's not back yet'". Zoe is the afraid he's not back yet; "Zoe is the plain, even, light writer whose sadness and sense whine through the letters for each other and for the child. This looks like a warning presentation of the possibilities of women's lives and friendship, but the characters don't quite fill the idea. Finally, despite 'engaging and sympathetic' scenes, Frances stays too bloodless, and Zoe too breezy, for the connection to take place.

There is a parallel hiatus to the action of the novel. The dramatic high is high: it includes death, a test for cancer, a storm and flood followed by a sex and a terrorist bomb. Yet it has a

Steven is not only an intimate grief but public property. Frances's world is more dimly lit, edged by editorial work for an unnamed institute and the minutiae of getting the new house straight, but she too has an external life to make. She does this in the intermittent company of her children, her sister-in-law Zoe (a brisk campaigning journalist), an American tourist friend and two lovers of differing degrees of unsatisfactoriness.

What Frances learns through these encounters is that the past doesn't stay still to be fingered over. It escapes to be reinterpreted by subsequent events. "I expected marriage to be other than it turned out to be. I expected Steven to be immortal. And now suddenly the past seems to me as unreliable as the future."

Defining her expectations and indeed her personality in this shifting context is a problem both for Frances and the reader; often she is identified in reflection. She is the "mother" of two children who turn out to be adopted. She is her husband's sister's friend, and Zoe, the sister-in-law, is the actual mother of Frances's daughter.

The contrast with Zoe ought to be instructive; Frances has been the controlling wife and mother, willing their children not to fall off cliffs and answering the telephone with "I'm afraid he's not back yet". Zoe is the plain, even, light writer whose sadness and sense whine through the letters for each other and for the child. This looks like a warning presentation of the possibilities of women's lives and friendship, but the characters don't quite fill the idea. Finally, despite 'engaging and sympathetic' scenes, Frances stays too bloodless, and Zoe too breezy, for the connection to take place.

curiously uneventful feel, as though all these incidents were not "tethered" (to use a favoured Livy word) to the people whose experiences they are.

Paolo Lively has an acute sense of the layers of history, a constant preoccupation of her books written both for adults and children. She cannot forget that every landscape she describes has witnessed other events; that all human dilemmas have repeated precedents. Frances waits at Bunkhill fields, thinking of Steven over the skeletons of 150,000 dead. Looking for her musician lover in Canterbury Cathedral, she almost fails to distinguish him among the crowds. Paolo Lively sits far enough back to recognize each face as a palimpsest of other faces; every place as an archaeological dig. This vision ought to endow the loves and losses of individual characters with a potency accrued through time and a multiple experience; but more often in *Perfect Happiness* the very breadth of the author's perception seems to blur the near-focus, and to lose the particular impact and poignancy of precisely those events happening to just these people.

Novelists short-listed for the 1983 Booker McConnell Prize are J. M. Coetzee, for *Life and Times of Michael K* (reviewed on page 1037 of this issue, and an extract from which appeared in the TLS of September 16); Graham Swift for *Waterland* (to be reviewed in next week's TLS); Malcolm Bradbury, for *Ranges of Exchange* (reviewed in the issue of April 8); Anita Mason, for *The Musician* (reviewed August 26); Salman Rushdie, for *Shame* (reviewed September 9); and John Fowles, for *Flying to Nowhere* (reviewed May 13). J. M. Coetzee's novels include *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *In the Heart of the Country*; Graham Swift won the 1983 Geoffrey Faber Award for *Shut-Out*; Malcolm Bradbury is the author of, among others, *The History Man* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*; Salman Rushdie won the Prize 1981 for *Midnight's Children*; John Fowles is the author of nine books, *Ugolino*, and *Flying to Nowhere* is his first novel in prose.

Inheriting identity

Anthony Fothergill

FORD MADOX FORD

The Rash Act

With an Introduction by C. H. Sisson

348pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £6.95.

0 85635 399 X

In *Memories and Impressions* Ford Madox Ford tells of how an aged relative, walking along the Strand, met a lion escaped from a nearby menagerie. "What did you do?" asked Ford. "Do?" asked the relative contemptuously. "Why, I took a cab." It is that sort of grace under pressure, that unthinking self-assuredness which Henry Martin Alvin Smith, the central figure in *The Rash Act*, both lacks and envies. It is also a confidence, Ford suggests, which belongs to an earlier generation, a different cultural milieu. For the novel is set in 1931, a period of economic and social crisis, in which "the prevailing dissoluteness and consequent depression are worldwide" – as the novel's epigraph (quoting from a coroner's report in *The Times*), explaining the "rash act" of suicide, puts it.

Though intended by Ford as the first in a post-war trilogy depicting these public events, so thoroughly does this novel (first published in 1933) render this fragmented world filtered through the consciousness of Henry Martin, that it achieves a completeness and autonomy of its own. Narrated solely from Martin's viewpoint, and for the most part just as he is about to commit suicide by stepping off a boat in the Mediterranean, the novel is a subtle variation on the theme of the drowning man who sees his life flash before him, but it avoids the conventionality of this by adopting a complicated time structure permitting flashbacks within flashbacks, ironic anticipations and echoes, and by creating a strong sense of a secret sharer; all of which is disconcerting and compelling.

The disinherited son of a wealthy American sweet manufacturer, financially and emotionally dependent on his mother, Henry Martin has (just about) decided to kill himself. He accidentally meets another Smith, Hugh Monckton Allard Smith (the initials should be noted), a former army acquaintance, a "glorious young man" of nonchalant manner and enormous wealth (he is also English), with whom Martin would like to

exchange identities; that is precisely what happens. For unlike the American Smith, who evades his own theatrically envisaged suicide, the English one, more despairing than he appears, actually accomplishes his "rash act" – in its own way a death – Henry Martin pretends to be Hugh Monckton to protect his reputation, and finally takes on his identity (as well as his girlfriends).

The contrivance of all this is absorbed by the immediacy with which it is achieved, and though there is a good deal of coincidence, sub-Fordian self-reflective novel business and considerable play made with misapplied letters – confused initials, misdirected correspondence, ignored French ones – there is a real seriousness of purpose beneath this clever surface, and a gradual accumulation of effect which outweighs the thinness of the plot. Martin's self-discovery, his shift from self-dramatizing to genuine acting, is well handled, and the problem of identification, trite at the level of swapped passports, resonates more deeply after the novel is finished.

There are weaknesses – Ford's choice of a "typical man of the period" as the central (and sometimes dulled) witness, who has a dogged habit of putting the penny in long after it has dropped; the irritating habit of elevating to a stylistic principle the knowing pace... which is often not nearly knowing enough; the sometimes sweeping and unconvincing judgments about racial and cultural "hybridization" and "types", and about female sexuality. It could be argued that Ford's narrative mode involves a limited point of view, and thus it is Martin's, not Ford's, sensibility that is in question. But a problem of authorial distance remains, and perhaps Ford's relation to Martin and his world is less than fully assured.

Ford told Ezra Pound that *The Rash Act* "is more like what I wanted to write than anything I have done for years", and later regarded it as his best book. Lacking the intensity and control of *The Good Soldier*, the range of the Tietjens books, it may not deserve that judgment. But it undoubtedly merits its reprinting with C. H. Sisson's useful introduction.

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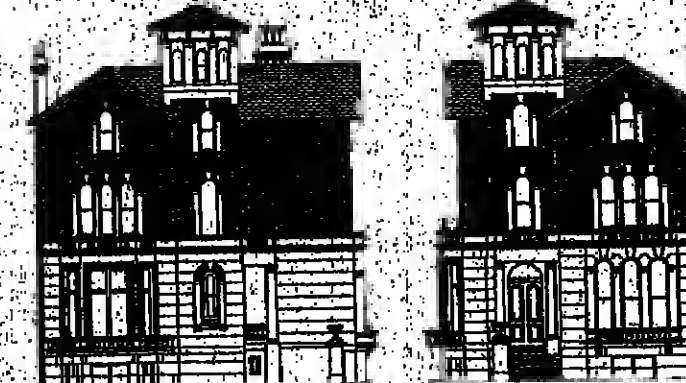
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VOLUME XLJ

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Specimen line drawing in text, of No. 24 Giltspur Road

Mobilization in the fields

Lucien Bianco

RALPH THAXTON

China Turned Rightside Up: Revolutionary Legitimacy in the Peasant World
286pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.
0 300 02707 9

In this ambitious but unconvincing book, Ralph Thaxton tackles the central problem of the Chinese Revolution: the role of the peasants in the Communist takeover. Such a summary of the book's theme will seem reductionist, if not tendentious to its author, who would rather read "in the peasant takeover" or, less contentiously, "in the greatest peasant revolution in history". Thaxton judiciously concentrates his investigation on a region of northern China which was one of the Communists' main rural bases during the war with Japan (1937-45). He has not only typed a considerable number of Chinese primary sources; he uses also, for purposes of comparison or of theorizing, many studies (E. J. Hobsbawm, James C. Scott, Charles Tilly) concerned with modern Europe or the contemporary Third World.

Before I get on to those of Thaxton's arguments which seem to me problematical, let me first express my agreement with him on three important points. The first concerns his method: his decision to set out from the peasant's own view of their conditions and their actions, their values and hopes. The strategy of a dissident elite inspired by Marxist-Leninism had to adapt itself to peasant strategies of survival dictated by a particularly harsh natural and social environment. My second point of agreement concerns, indeed, the social exploitation and political oppression from which the peasantry suffered (in northern China and elsewhere) on the eve of the Revolution - these are undeniable, though I was frequently disappointed by the expressions (on occasion, the Homeric epithets) which Thaxton uses to characterize them.

My final point of agreement is more circumstantial, but it concerns a debate that has divided students of modern China during the war with Japan, which was a period of decisive progress for the Communist movement, especially in the region Thaxton is studying: peasant support for the Communists went much less to those offering armed resistance against the invaders than to the social (or revolutionary) reformers who had undertaken to improve the peasants' lot. Apart from these three major points, I also agree with many points of detail made in the course of the book, all the more so because these are neither as new nor as original as the dust-jacket gives us to understand. It is to Thaxton's central argument that I am unable to subscribe.

It goes as follows: such was the impact of the catastrophic worsening of their condition under the Republic, and the increasingly brutal and immoral (because without compensation) exploitation inflicted on them by landlords and warlords, that the peasants had already turned towards revolution before, and independently of, their mobilization by the Communists. Vigorously restating "the now obvious fact that the peasants' revolutionary mobilization preceded and outpaced the development of party presence", Thaxton concludes his book by going directly counter to the view of what he would call the "mainstream" specialists: "what has been depicted as 'institutionalized mass participation' in a revolution to which the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] gave birth was actually the product of the CCP's relatively limited interaction with a peasantry that was of its own volition turning to revolution."

What Thaxton takes to be "obvious" does not seem so to me. In the first place, his argument in Chapter Two, concerning the appearance in this century of "shockingly new conditions that eroded the long established bases of agrarian political legitimacy and edged peasants towards a revolutionary confrontation with the dominant class" is far from convincing. By relying on Communist sources which are not always objective, and on eyewitness accounts that are by definition subjective, and ignoring other less questionable sources, Thaxton portrays an evolution that does not match the reality. In a country like China, which is as vast and as diverse as Europe, the most extreme and scandalous situations could be found. Intolerable abuses like those Thaxton describes occurred on many occasions and in many different places. It would be easy, for example, to lay more stress than Thaxton in fact does on the harmful effects of the "practised" *land-rent* which was increasingly used under the Republic, or of the annual *tenures* which replaced longer-term contracts, to supply a good dozen more equally eloquent varieties of the "three kinds of landlord usury" described on pp 43-4, or to complete Thaxton's enumeration of surtaxes and abuses of taxation.

What one needs to try to do, however, is to evaluate the *average* amount of rents and their evolution under the Republic, the most common rates of interest (and their evolution), and to work out the proportion of the agricultural product represented on average in the tax-uptake. The last did in fact increase during the Nanking decade (1927-37), is, under the Kuomintang, yet remained well below the land-rent. The latter may on occasion have attained the 70 to 80 per cent of the crop mentioned by Thaxton (though in less than 5 per cent of cases, according to a survey made at the

time), but on average it did not exceed 45 per cent. Pages 38-40 give a very distorted view of the average amount of rent and of tenancy practices under the Republic, as well as of the incidence of tenancy in northern China. Either the localities in northern China referred to by Thaxton are unrepresentative, or the sources he cites are unreliable, or both. If the practice of pre-rent deposits became more widespread (though it was still in a minority), it was quite exceptional for the deposit to be non-refundable, just as it was exceptional for landlords to require the tenant to pay the land-tax as a precondition for tenure renewal, or for the insolvent debtor to pay off both rent and taxes on the field taken over for, to use Thaxton's word, "usurped" by his creditor. Sharecropping was increasingly replaced by fixed rents but not "at the accelerated pace" indicated by Thaxton. In cases where the replacement took effect, it is not right to say that in bad years their landlords demanded integral payment of a rent higher than the totality of the harvest. And so on.

More irritating even than Thaxton's unconvincing use of his sources, and his unjustified generalizations from unrepresentative examples, is the lack of rigour in his exposition and argument. I will give just one example: "The tax collectors took this surtax almost solely from peasant landowners - most of them already indebted to usurers in an economy increasingly affected by inflation." The first statement is accurate, the second call for correction, but that is not the main point. What inflation is this? The context gives no details of the period, but it does not seem to refer to the disastrous inflation of the 1940s. And above all, in what way were debtors affected, who normally benefit from inflation? As for taxpayers, during the first fifteen years of the Republic they benefited from the rise in prices, especially agricultural prices, which seemed to rise less to have compensated them for the nominal rise (albeit in this period) of taxes. On several occasions, Thaxton depicts a brutal worsening of the peasants' lot by postulating the cumulative effects of factors which did not all occur at the same time nor work to the one direction.

This one-sided picture exaggerates the role of social exploitation at the expense of factors such as demographic pressure. If an egalitarian distribution of land had been achieved in Yao village, in the province of Hunan, where Thaxton stresses the extreme concentration of ownership, each family would have got a third of the land. One of the main factors to which Thaxton does pay sufficient attention (he rightly attributes to it a major responsibility for the difficulties of the Republic) is the financial crisis of

the central government, but he exaggerates its foreign origins. In all, he does not provide us with a satisfactory explanation of the change he postulates in the nature of the dominant class (in particular, the emergence under the Republic of "immoral landlording") and of the exploitation it inflicted on the peasantry.

With the coming to power of the Kuomintang a new degree of horror enters Thaxton's picture of peasant conditions (I would point it myself in very dark colours, but the terms he uses are apocalyptic). The nationalist regime he characterizes as another warlord regime, a bit more repressive simply, or more efficiently repressive; but in his desire to bring out only the military, oppressive and dictatorial nature of what he calls "the Kuomintang junta", Thaxton gives us a caricature of a more complex reality, and assimilates the regime in its beginnings to what it became twenty years later.

If we stick to the condition of tenants and to agrarian reform (quickly laid aside by the regime, which either could not or would not stand up to the landlords), there was a time, between 1927 and 1930, when the landlords of the province of Zhejiang, on the Kuomintang's local officials, who wanted to lower rents by 25 per cent, as dangerous and misguided agitators. The Kuomintang, moreover, did not put down peasant agitation as systematically as Thaxton assures us that it did. In its own interest there were times when it made concessions to rioters, went back on certain unpopular measures or delayed their implementation, distributed footstuffs to starving pilgrims, and so on. I cannot myself follow Thaxton when he suggests that "the Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] warlord counterrevolution" reduced the Chinese peasantry to accepting that "the opportunistic revolt" was their only possible strategy for survival, and that this peasantry turned spontaneously to revolution, even before the outbreak of the Japanese war. Granted that all any of us can have of a reality we must try to imagine from the visible tip of the iceberg, I consider for my part that spontaneous peasant agitation before the war, and before the massive mobilization of the peasants by the Communists, stemmed rather from what Thaxton calls "the ramediolist protest", a category reduced to the barest essentials in the typology and arguments of his third chapter. He does not examine at any length a form of protest whose limits he rightly perceives. I believe all the same that the struggle which had begun "as defensive mobilizations" nearly always remained such, and that the "attempts to create alternative orders of power" stem, with very rare

exceptions, from an act of faith by the author.

Having expressed my disagreement with Thaxton so sharply, I would like to say how I myself perceive peasant militancy under the Republic, which is in much more negative terms than he does. For me, this militancy remained essentially defensive and particularist. What it was was a desperate attempt to safeguard what interests of a manifoldly complex class than the precarious existence of an often beleaguered community of an often beleaguered social make-up. The relative increase of anti-tax disturbances can perhaps be held to be a corollary and confirmation of the increasing weight of the tax burden under the nationalist regime. But, especially compared with the reality and traditional character of social movements directed against the rich, the clear predominance of anti-disturbances testifies also to an undeveloped and seldom explicit class consciousness. Almost without exception, the peasant rebels of Republican China - their lists included - do not seem to have followed any overall strategy, nor have been inspired by any global view of society; they did not challenge the bases of social organization, they wanted only to obtain the righting of a wrong or a return to an earlier state of affairs. The anti-disturbances which one might, one had to, infer from their actions, that of a backward-looking utopianism, a protest against the changes of the time accompanied by occasion by a nostalgia for the good old days.

It was these peasants, who had learned from experience to distrust society, to *nomine*, like the Revolution, whom the Communists finally mobilized in order to accomplish a Revolution which paraded in seeing as their (the Communists') creation to a far greater extent than Thaxton allows. For a very reason that I never saw approved of his concentration on the masses rather than the elite, and the fact that, I consider, the Communists needed to do so and to overcome in order for this adaptation and mobilization that was no foregone conclusion.

The final lines of his book, in that detached optimism, make me think of a further disagreement with him. Not only I do not allow the Communists to have a generous role in the conquest of power in 1949, but I fear that today it holds a greater share of the inheritance of the victorious Revolution. In other words, that it both made and, and owns the Revolution to a greater extent than one would think from reading Ralph Thaxton's book.

POETRY

Confronting the bogeymen

Gavin Ewart

Kit Wright
Jump-Starting the Hearse
Hutchinson, £4.95.
0 09 13311 2

Peter Reading
Diopole
Secker and Warburg, £5.50.
0 306 40883 6

Nearly fifty years ago Hugh Oerden wrote a notable piece on *Diopole* in which he said "Vase is being over-read this year, and again, this year, in the spirit of that inaccurately remembered quotation, one might say that it is being over-black."

The two poets here are certainly not new to the theatre. Kit Wright's poem "Hoffa's a Oddam Hubcap" is a neat to the effect that the body of Jimmy Hoffa of the Teamsters' Union is "said to have been disposed of in a car-crusher". This piece of folklore was also incorporated into one of the James Bond films. The same lyric here celebrates his new existence. Peter Reading has a poem in the *Hawthorne* metre about a female OAP of eighty-seven who is assaulted and robbed by two yobboes. This is a rough one, and was too rough for the BBC (selected but never transmitted by *Poetry Now*).

Kit Wright is a songster. All the poems have a strong beat; not usually the turn-of-tune of Beethoven, but a more random and broken rhythm. His poem about the Archers is brilliantly witty. On the other hand, "The Specialists" is as bleak and comfortless as anything could be.

Wright you dreamed this
new-old dream
and woke and the whole cold
thing was true.

The last line here overweighs the comic but often they go hand in hand. "Cape Diem" has a refrain: "The world, overkill, / The worst thing that will happen / Will: / The world shall

roll the world away: / Seize the day." This is very typical of Wright's poetry. Sad little songs like this alternate with the perky dark humour of "Personal Advertisement": "TASTY GEEZER / STUCK IN SNEEZER / YEAR BEFORE / GETS OUT / SEEKS / SLOW-WITTED / OIANT-TITTED / SOCIOLOGIST VISITOR / WHO LIKES / TO MESS ABOUT." Connadins are always supposed to be sad, and Wright is no exception. All of his poems show a lively inventiveness. The ones that operate on the surface, and do not flirt so much with despair, are perfect of their kind: "Like A Fairy Tale" (personal freshness), "Wang" (personal freshness), for example. The Liverpool poems and the re-working of the Ruth Ellis case in terms of Frankie and Johnny are both moving examples of how a "light" song-writer's technique can deal with serious subject matter. There is a Betjemanesque ability to convey time and place:

The hearse has stalled in the lone
overlooking the river
Where willows are plunging their heads in
the bottle-green water
And bills of green baize drakes
kazoos.
The hearse has stalled and what shall
we do?

There are also images of great beauty: "The shuttlecock soars to heaven like a snowflake, / Drifts to the earth like a snowflake." This is a remarkably satisfying book, and an extremely accessible one.

Peter Reading is black in a different way, but he too is "diopole" (what is funny about "diopole" is that there is nothing "light" in his verse; in the old accepted sense; nor does he write songs, as Wright does - though he does write an occasional rhymed sonnet. His methods are more discursive and Wordsworthian, harking back to the unrhymed limerick pentameter. The subject matter, the nasty side of our industrial society, is nevertheless often similar to Wright's: madness and violence, laughing till you cry (compare Wright's "The Divine Comedy" and Reading's "A Recollection").

Reading is keener to use unorthodox

Between two states

James Campbell

Norman MacCaig
A World of Difference
Secker and Warburg/Hogarth
£5.95.
0 306 2693 9

One of the most reassuring features of Norman MacCaig's poetry used to be that it never set out to provide a direct answer to difficult questions about human predicaments. His procedure was to examine himself as artfully but as honestly as possible, in the hope of discovering his surroundings. In the process, "Self under self, a pile of glass / I stand / Threaded on time", he wrote thirty years ago in "Summer Rain". MacCaig's still wary of easy certainties, and the questioning continues in language as vivid and as accurate as ever. In "From my window" he observes a group of pook men pre-dramatised. His procedure was to examine himself as artfully but as honestly as possible, in the hope of discovering his surroundings. In the process, "Self under self, a pile of glass / I stand / Threaded on time", he wrote thirty years ago in "Summer Rain". MacCaig's still wary of easy certainties, and the questioning continues in language as vivid and as accurate as ever. In "From my window" he observes a group of pook men pre-dramatised.

The hills behind Balmoral stare gloriously back at him. They're prodding and poking for the Queen's watercloos. MacCaig is a prolific poet who hardly ever produces duds, but this new collection (his fiftieth) contains more consequential poems than his last, *The Equal Skies*. Yet there is not a page which the familiar dexterity falls to enliven. Although the verse has become much freer, only now and then is it slack, and the ingenious metaphors with which he transforms the knowable world into something at once more accessible and more mysterious are still without the self-indulgence which sometimes characterizes his imitations. There are poems here - "Pibroch: The Harp Tree" and "From my window" - which are as good as anything about as good as you can get.

me - It is now more likely to be violated by wholesale pessimism. In a certain mood, MacCaig's answer is nothing that comfortable absolute. This darkness can be total, unless the poet's will, and the faith he places in poetry, themselves count as forms of illumination: even the blakest lines have the saving grace of fresh perceptions and imagery. "To a dead friend" ends,

I travel daily and helplessly
to that thicket of threads,
that black river,
that destroyer of memory.

But *A World of Difference* is divided into two moods, gloom and joy, which the poet communicates with equal force. MacCaig swings between two states - wonder and envy at the "conspicuous" of the animal kingdom, and pity and contempt for those poor creatures "cramped with humanity" and frequently expresses both in a single poem. Side by side with the delight in language and the natural world, there is abundant wit. John Brown, Queen Victoria's manservant, sees

The hills behind Balmoral stare gloriously back at him. They're prodding and poking for the Queen's watercloos. MacCaig is a prolific poet who hardly ever produces duds, but this new collection (his fiftieth) contains more consequential poems than his last, *The Equal Skies*. Yet there is not a page which the familiar dexterity falls to enliven. Although the verse has become much freer, only now and then is it slack, and the ingenious metaphors with which he transforms the knowable world into something at once more accessible and more mysterious are still without the self-indulgence which sometimes characterizes his imitations. There are poems here - "Pibroch: The Harp Tree" and "From my window" - which are as good as anything about as good as you can get.

ways of writing poems. Instructions for use (industrial machinery), specifications of a French tank (military), a wedding-present list (all these are incorporated). He uses a cast of characters, with cross-references from one poem to another. Sometimes the unpleasantness seems forced. Of a group of hooligans he writes: "three of the four are cross-eyed, all are acned". Would an African student prince, having married a Scots girl (Flora Mackenzie, Second Year English) Waugh never, perhaps; but here this seems overdoing it.

The book is cleverly constructed, as was Reading's last collection *Ton of Bedlam's Beauties*. These were all poems about madness. Here lack of sophistication is also punished (see "Carte Postale", where a very simple young girl suffers from her sexual anaesthesia). You don't have to do anything wrong to get it in the neck, you just have to be a natural victim - an old lady, a mynah bird, a female student, a bystander when Portales are unloaded, a Nigerian chicken in danger of being sodomized. In fact, if you are a criminal you stand a better chance of survival. Life as hard as

Latitudes of home

Alan Hollinghurst

James Michie
New and Selected Poems
64pp. Chatto and Windus. £3.95.
0 7011 2723 6

Alistair Elliot
Talking Back
61pp. Secker and Warburg. £4.95.
0 436 14260 0

Both James Michie and Alistair Elliot are distinguished translators, who have to a large extent performed their creative roles within the worlds of other writers. In their own poetry, however, they take quite different lines from each other with regard to the larger and older literary spheres which, as translators, they inhabit. Elliot's poetry instantly takes its cultural bearings; Michie's, a tendency to epigram notwithstanding, is in many respects less clever and allusive.

This is no disadvantage for Michie, whose particular thing is the revelation of personal uncensored, self-disaffection and self-deception. Yet his manner is usually formal, rhyming, stanzic; at times it is a little old-fashioned, as the continuity of style between his new poems and those from *Possible Language* (1959), gathered in the present volume, confirms. The tension between formal control and subject-matter that is essentially dissident is what determines the character of Michie's best work.

Many of his poems are about being alone and recognizing the instability or inadequacy of the speaker's personality. "The apple which longed for a stone accepted a melody of pips in the end, a dozen selves all acting..." But the mood of isolation and unfulfilment is often conveyed in light metaphorical packages, in alert, economical *jeu d'esprit*; the latter colloquy is even presented in Skeltonics. The effect of such discipline, however, is that the poems are less helpful to increase our confidence in their author; his technical skill establishes his claim to our attention and validates the curious solitariness and sadness which he discovers. The paradoxical confidence of such forms enlarges the self-doubt of his subjects into a doubt about poetry too. A "new poem" "The Last Wasp" memorably describes how the "boresomeness of Autumn precipitates action, 'live and work' on the long, muddy slog back through memory" but "this fall through memory" is alleged, in the resurrection of hope is alleged, in the previous poem, "The Wasp" like the forms of self-deception, "like the temporary stages of poems, which, though mendaciously help one get through."

That writing is for Michie an inappetite, or fickle art, is further suggested by the small quantity of

this? In places, of course, yes. Nobody could take in the day's news from press, radio and television without realizing that this is not the best of all possible worlds, and may not even last much longer.

Reading is a learned poet. He mentions the Helene, *Risso viduaria*, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *cherephrassa*, Huntington's Chorea. Although he's funny, it's sinister fun; as in "Minima" and "Telecommunication" - "Yes, Grandma's bones might fossilize, of course, like these in your First Book of Dinosaurs." Wright, by contrast, is far more like everyman's favourite poet; there are no difficulties of vocabulary or specialist allusion. "All a poet can do today is wam", wrote Wilfred Owen. People have also thought that he can take political action; but the principle remains. Many things in human life (disease, diabolical bad luck) are unalterable, at least in our time-span. Poems that confront the bogeymen bring, at least, the consolation that they can be confronted. Artistic protest is a positive way of hitting back, and this is the great virtue of these two very talented poets.

Alistair Elliot's poems, although less sentimental than Michie's, draw even more of a picture of the poet in the exploration of private and domestic life. But where Michie mediates his feelings through very formalities, Elliot adopts a more Augustan procedure of locating himself and his ambitions in a framework of cultural and historical references. His literary and family standing are established in the first poem, "Talking to Horace". "Talks to Bede" and "John Elliot" are the former's Horatian dialogue with Horace that, like Pope's Horatian poems, serves to characterize the poet and to present his attitudes with an edge of pride; the latter a belated elegy to his grandfather who is located in time by reference to other cultural events, born "while Mendelssohn's violin concerto / was being first performed" - though a note disingenuously claims this family tradition to be a mistake "probably encountered in George Dubourg's history of the violin (5th edition, 1878) which I have not seen" (my italics).

The bookish, slightly difficult persona is, however, continually ironized and qualified by an acknowledgment of those times and states of mind when it feels unprotected by its cleverness and *savoir-faire*. An ingeniously paradoxical sonnet, "The Latitudes of Home", points to the places "in the house connected with reading and learning" - "Here I read Biggles in this chair, / 'Ulysses' in the telescope" - and a later elegy to his grandfather who is located in time by reference to other cultural events, born "while Mendelssohn's violin concerto / was being first performed" - though a note disingenuously claims this family tradition to be a mistake "probably encountered in George Dubourg's history of the violin (5th edition, 1878) which I have not seen" (my italics).

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Other affecting personal poems include "A Touch of Death", a dream piece, reminiscent of John Fuller, in which the speaker imagines his own arm to be dead; and "At Saxeid Green", a visit with his wife and children to the great windmill, whose sudden movement brings on an analogous movement of intellectual panic in the visitors. "Horrible when the deep machine takes over."

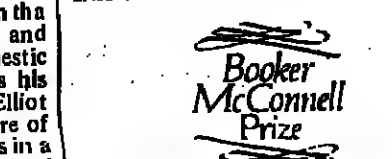
But such and such and compelling pieces are interspersed with more cheerful poems of history and travel, including a savorious sequence derived from Eliot's time in Shiraz. His biographical note summarizes a widely-travelled and experienced polyglot and polymath; his poems, in their wit, diversity, allusiveness, and subtlety, are a deliberate reflection of this multiplex personality.



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Mao's aftermath

Della Davin

Erwin Wickert
The Middle Kingdom: Inside China
286pp. Hutchinson. £12.50.
0 09 13311 9

Erwin Wickert is a German career diplomat who first served in China at a time when the Second World War was still in progress. He was then German Ambassador, a post which he held until his retirement in 1980. Those were fascinating years. Within days of Dr Wickert's arrival Mao died. The arrest of the Gang of Four followed almost "at once" and for a time, though, China was a land of hope. However, Mao's self-proclaimed successor, seemed to be consolidating his power successfully. Then, in August 1977, and Hua's power was turned out to be a puppet. Sharp changes took place in social, economic and political life while every week

brought some fresh revelation about the past.

All this, together with the greater openness of the country to foreigners, made a splendid copy and, predictably, the result has been a spate of "my time in China" books. The majority by journalists. To be sure, these accounts resemble each other. They rely heavily on chance encounters, give only a impression of past and present life in China, they discuss the beauties of Peking's palaces and the harshness of the climate. The importance of the Chinese family always merits attention, and so just inevitably do the mysteries of Chinese sex life.

Compared with Western journalists, Wickert seems to have had a more surprising, rather, few close encounters with ordinary Chinese. What distinguishes *The Middle Kingdom* from most other books of this genre is the fact that it is written by a diplomat. His stance is that of the interested but detached observer and he shows a diplomatic tolerance for the involvement of both Western journalists with the

movement, believing that it not only harmed the dissidents but was based on an exaggerated assessment of the movement's long-term significance. His post enabled him to observe Chinese leaders closely and his pen-portraits of Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping fill out the dull biographical outlines so diligently produced by Chinese writers. His judgement, allowing for the perspective of an urban, socially conservative, career diplomat, are sound and well informed. It is interesting to learn that the competition for jobs in effect in universities with Hong Kong Institute of government, informed of what is happening in China, Wickert trusts its "instinct" rather than the dispatches is a good illustration of the frustration of diplomatic life.

Though a close-knit diary makes a good copy, Wickert does report one personal piece of hearsay. He dating back to 1966 between Mao and a young woman who is said to have had his child. The story might seem of little significance elsewhere,

but the moral climate of a country, where people are still on occasion imprisoned for extra-marital relationships makes it dynamite. One may well speculate on why such a story came to the ears of a diplomat. Was it, as his biographer told him, that they felt he ought to know? If so, would they have taken the risk of telling him on their own initiative? Were they provoked by someone who wished to see Mao's image diminished further? Was it simply one of the fascinating but baseless rumours which seem to fly round Peking? Wickert wisely declines comment.

Although the English translation of this book reads smoothly enough and the "romanticization" is commendably accurate, the misreading of what the Chinese call "Mao Zedong Thought" is a more surprising error. Wickert's translation of *Kaihua*, the word for meeting or to meet, as "political drama" is only fair to add that he elsewhere displays considerable selectivity, and despite his claim that he is no sinologist, his discussions are informed by a credible knowledge of Chinese history.

Chinese Literature published in English each month stories and poems which views with writers, reproduces pictures and reviews of exhibitions, profiles of leading figures in the arts and media, short notices of books and news items. (There is a corresponding publication in French, quarterly.)

The August 1983 issue (139pp, China Publications Centre, PO Box 30, Beijing) contains recent short stories by Jiang Zilong ("New Year's Greetings"), Gu Hua ("It Happened in South Bay", set in the Hainan province), and two by the semi-famous writer Duannan Hongling, with whom an interview is also printed. A profile of the star of the film *My Life*, Li Shihong, who drowned in his early forties in 1957, is followed by a story by drama director and actor. There are also articles by Guan Liang, the painter, and a short story by a woman writer, on seal carving, and on a gallery of woodblock prints by famous southern Chinese river city of Suzhou, written by Ming Mao.

